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## THE ROUNDABOUT

*ALSO BY J. B. PRIESTLEY*

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# THE ROUNDABOUT

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

*by*

J. B. PRIESTLEY



*London*

WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD

*Printed in Great Britain  
at The Windmill Press, Kingswood*



to  
WILLIAM ARMSTRONG



## PREFACE

THIS play might be shortly described as an attempt to construct a very light comedy out of material a little less intellectually negligible than the material out of which most very light comedies are constructed. Since its original production for a special holiday run at the Playhouse, Liverpool, various repertory companies up and down the country have nosed it out and produced it with, I believe, some success, and I have the satisfaction of knowing that it has made people laugh in some of the grimmest cities in this island. No doubt there are some possible future producers among the readers of this edition (though Messrs. Samuel French publish the usual acting edition for their benefit), and so I will offer them a few observations on the piece. Pamela should be played by an actress who is very young, reasonably pretty, very intelligent, and able to speak her lines with a certain bland, clear intonation. Lord Kettlewell must not be turned into the conventional heavy father. And all of them must play as if they are enjoying themselves, though it is not for me to assume that they will be.

J. B. PRIESTLEY.



*CHARACTERS*  
(in order of appearance)

LORD KETTLEWELL  
CHURTON SAUNDERS  
PARSONS  
ALEC GRENSIDE  
PAMELA KETTLEWELL  
COMRADE STAGGLES  
FARRINGTON GURNEY  
LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE  
HILDA LANCICOURT  
ALICE  
LADY KETTLEWELL

The action of the play takes place one day in the lounge drawing-room of Lord Kettlewell's country house. The time of the year is late summer or early autumn.

ACT I. Morning  
ACT II. Afternoon  
ACT III. Evening



*First produced at The Playhouse, Liverpool (The Liverpool Repertory Theatre), on Wednesday, December 14th, 1932, with the following cast:*

(Characters in the order of their appearance)

LORD KETTLEWELL	JAMES STEPHENSON
CHURTON SAUNDERS	WYNDHAM GOLDIE
PARSONS	LLOYD PEARSON
ALEC GRENSIDE	ROBERT FLEMYNG
PAMELA KETTLEWELL	JANE VAUGHAN
COMRADE STAGGLES	GEOFFREY EDWARDS
FARRINGTON GURNEY	JACK ALLEN
LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE	MARJORIE FIELDING
HILDA LANCICOURT	ENA BURRILL
LADY KETTLEWELL	AMABEL GIBSON
ALICE	BETTY LANGLEY

The Play produced by WILLIAM ARMSTRONG.

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## ACT I

*The Lounge Drawing-room of Lord Kettlewell's country house.*

*On the right and at the back there are French windows opening on to a garden, which can be seen. On the left at the back is the main door, and on the extreme left is the service door through which the butler and the parlourmaid come and go. There are bookcases, small tables, a settee and several easy chairs. There is also a small desk at which Lord Kettlewell is seated when the curtain rises. He is dressed in tweeds, and is a middle-aged man of some presence and consequence, but not too domineering or pompous in manner. It is a fine morning in late summer or early autumn, and though Lord Kettlewell is looking through some documents, he obviously does not intend to spend the rest of the day working. He gets up for a cigarette, lights it, then returns to his desk just as his friend and guest CHURTON SAUNDERS—middle-aged, spruce, amiable, and a talker—lounges in and stands near the door for a moment.*

SAUNDERS: Good morning, Richard. (*Coming into the room.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*looking up*): Good morning, Chuffy. What do you mean, you idle devil, by coming down so late?

SAUNDERS: It's no use. I've got into the habit now of coming down late when I week-end in the country. I

cultivated the habit so that I wouldn't be shown things. I hate being shown things, and if you don't come down very late, when you're staying in the country, your host or hostess insists upon showing you the double delphinium border, or the pigs, or the twenty-acre field, or the rood screen in the church. And now I've got into the habit, I can't break it.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You didn't expect that I'd show you anything, did you, Chuffy?

SAUNDERS: No, I knew you better than that.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, you were wrong. I'm going to show you some ruins.

SAUNDERS: Oh no, Richard. I loathe ruins.

LORD KETTLEWELL: These aren't far away. They're there. (*Pointing to papers on desk.*) Here are the ruins of four well-known limited companies.

SAUNDERS (*looking with mock attention*): They're not very picturesque.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): They are when you get to know them better.

PARSONS *enters*.

PARSONS: Beg pardon, your lordship, but word has just come through that Mr. Gurney's on his way.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Is he driving down?

PARSONS: Yes, your lordship. He left London over an hour ago.

LORD KETTLEWELL: He ought to be here any minute, then. I want to see him the moment he comes.

PARSONS: Very good, your lordship.

*Goes out.*

SAUNDERS: Who is this Mr. Gurney who will arrive any minute?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Gurney—Farrington Gurney—grandson of the old admiral. He's my secretary.

SAUNDERS: Then, what about that useful and severe female I've seen you talk to in town? Isn't she your secretary?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, but she's different. She only knows typewriting, shorthand, book-keeping French, German, Italian, and the finer points of English grammar.

SAUNDERS: Just one of the ignorant masses.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Exactly. Young Gurney doesn't know any of these things and so he gets three times the money. He's an Etonian. He was out East for a time—tea planting.

SAUNDERS: If ever I have any money again—which is most unlikely—I must go out East and see them plant tea. I suspect you have to do it with polo sticks and the handles of cricket bats. But what does this ex-tea planter do for you?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—he arranges things for me—a sort of combined business and social secretary. He talks like a fool sometimes—and I'm not sure he doesn't look like one—but he's got his head screwed on.

SAUNDERS: That must be wretched for him. I've always been glad my head hasn't been screwed on. I like to keep moving it about.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, you haven't used it much so far to-day. Do you know I've done a good morning's work?

SAUNDERS: Why be so virtuous about it? You've only been taking money away from people.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*firmly*): I've been working.

SAUNDERS: That's what I say. You've been taking money away from people who can't afford it and people you've never even met. Probably widows, orphans, and retired rural deans.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Don't be so old-fashioned. You can't take money away from people like that any more.

SAUNDERS: Why not?

LORD KETTLEWELL: They haven't got any. And I've not been making money. One can't make money any more. I've been losing it. Everybody is.

SAUNDERS: So I understand. Tell me, Richard—who gets the money that all the people who make money are losing?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Nobody gets it. It just dwindles.

SAUNDERS: Like woollens in the wash.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes—or like an ice in the sun.

SAUNDERS: Don't be poetical, Richard, or you'll soon lose all your money.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I shall do that anyhow.

SAUNDERS: Then you must stop trying to make money. Obviously it's too expensive. You must economise by going in for pleasure instead of business.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I can't waste my time like you, Chuffy.

SAUNDERS: Not yet perhaps, but it'll come with practice.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I like to work hard and then to play hard.

SAUNDERS: And I don't know which is the greater mistake.

ALEC GRENSIDE *enters. He is a carelessly dressed, rather fierce young man, carrying a sketch-book.*

ALEC: I've been having another look at those panels and I've made some rough sketches—— (*Catching sight of SAUNDERS.*) Oh, sorry!

LORD KETTLEWELL: That's all right, Grenside. You don't know one another, do you? (*To SAUNDERS.*) He'd turned in when you arrived, last night. Mr. Churton Saunders—Mr. Alec Grenside.

SAUNDERS: How d'you do? Didn't I see one-man show of yours at the Portland Gallery last winter?

ALEC: I had one there. I sold two pictures. It didn't pay expenses.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Nothing does nowadays.

SAUNDERS: Not even the funerals of rich aunts. But I liked your work. Are you going to do those panels in the library?

ALEC: I hope so. (*To LORD KETTLEWELL as he moves to the desk.*) I've made some rough sketches—very rough. Nothing you'd recognise yet. (*Handing sketch-book.*)

SAUNDERS: That sounds as if there might be something in the end he will recognise. You mustn't be old-fashioned, Mr. Grenside.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, go ahead. (*ALEC turns away.*) But I'd better warn you, Grenside, here and now. Have you ever heard of Imperial Necessities, Limited?

ALEC: No, I haven't. Unless it's a novel by Arnold Bennett.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): It isn't a novel by anybody, though I won't say we haven't put a good amount of fiction into it. But I warn you that unless Imperial Necessities, Limited, takes a turn for the better, you won't get any commission from me. I shan't be able to afford it.

ALEC: Oh, I'll risk that. Those panels are grand spaces to fill. I'm getting excited about the job. But if you don't mind, I want to run back to town for a couple of old sketch-books I have there. I'll be back this evening, if that's all right to you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Of course.

ALEC: Thank you, sir.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You've got a car?

ALEC: I've got bits of one. With any luck, they ought to get me back here to-night. Then I'll have something good to show you—I hope. Good-day, sir.

*Nods and goes out.*

SAUNDERS: A very promising youngster.

LORD KETTLEWELL: So I'm told.

SAUNDERS: Who put you on to him?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Curiously enough, it was Rose.

SAUNDERS: Rose! You don't mean——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, my wife, of course. You don't think I'm surrounded by Roses, do you?

SAUNDERS: Does it mean you've been seeing her lately?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, it doesn't. I haven't spoken to her for at least two years. But she wrote to me about this young Grenside. He's by way of being a protégé of hers. I suppose this antiques-picture-decorating business of hers brings her into touch with these young artists. She wrote to me about him, and I took him on. That's all.

SAUNDERS: And very dull and disappointing too. I jumped to the conclusion——

LORD KETTLEWELL: You're always jumping to conclusions.

SAUNDERS: I know I am, but it's the only exercise I get. But it looked to me as if you were about to stage a reconciliation with Rose.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*sharply*): Certainly not.

SAUNDERS: Exit the Other Woman. Re-enter the Wife. That's how I saw it. You told me last night you'd written, briefly and sternly, to Hilda Lancicourt——

LORD KETTLEWELL (*uneasily*): Yes, and I expected a reply this morning. I haven't had one.

SAUNDERS (*enjoying himself*): That may mean one of two things. Either she's taking it hard or she's taking it easily. And I must say I don't see Mrs. Lancicourt taking such a dismissal easily.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Nor do I. If I'd had one of those long letters that women write——

SAUNDERS: I know. With thickets of exclamation marks.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'd be relieved. But not a word. And I know she's in town, and she knows I'm here.

SAUNDERS: And not a single exclamation mark has entered the house this morning?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No. And I don't like the look of it. It's my belief, Chuffy, that she means to descend upon me.

SAUNDERS (*cheerfully*): She's probably on her way now, with a little cyanide of potassium in her handbag.

LORD KETTLEWELL: It'll be a damned nuisance if she does come.

SAUNDERS: You've only yourself to blame, Richard. It's your old failing. You're too weak with the sex.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I suppose that's true. But—damn it, Chuffy—what can a fellow do?

SAUNDERS: If a fellow really wishes to protect himself, a fellow can do all sorts of things. He can give out that he's bankrupt——

LORD KETTLEWELL. I shall probably do that very soon anyhow. But that wouldn't stop it.

SAUNDERS: He can shave his head and paint large purple spots all over his face. He can retire into a monastery. He could even consult a good surgeon.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I can handle men all right—don't have much trouble with them. But women——!

SAUNDERS: Ah!—you strong men. Now I don't pretend to be able to impose myself upon my fellow-men. But women—why, I can be as hard as nails with women. I dare say I could be with children too. And dogs—little ones. I could ill-treat them all.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Chuffy, you're a degenerate scoundrel.



SAUNDERS: And you're a big baby. And the natural prey of predatory females. It's lucky for you you've only been separated from your wife these last ten years and not divorced, or one of these creatures would have married you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: God forbid! Though I sometimes think a man might as well be married and have done with it.

SAUNDERS: Have done with what? I've never been able to discover what you've done with when you're married. But if Rose hadn't left you——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Rose didn't leave me, we simply agreed to separate.

SAUNDERS: Yes, but she agreed first, didn't she?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, it was entirely mutual.

SAUNDERS: Well, if she hadn't separated, taking your female child with her, by this time you might have had a whole gang of them, all busy twisting you round their little fingers.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, at least they'd be little fingers belonging to the Kettlewell family. But, of course, you're exaggerating. You always do.

SAUNDERS: Of course I do. It's one of the few luxuries I can still afford.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I may be easy-going with 'em, but I'm not as weak as all that. If I'd a family, I'd be the head of it. None of this modern nonsense.

SAUNDERS: Modern nonsense is always something that's going on in other people's families. But tell me now—the female child—your only daughter—what's her name——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Pamela.

SAUNDERS: Pamela, of course. She must have reached her twenties now.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Twenty-one. Or two. I forget.

SAUNDERS: Has she grown up to be an attractive girl?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*impatiently*): I haven't the least idea. I haven't set eyes on the child for an age. I doubt if I'd know her now if I did see her.

SAUNDERS: All very unnatural of you, Richard. You're really the kind of man who ought to be brimming with paternal instinct. You ought to be living your life all over again in your little ones.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I can't imagine anything more disgusting.

SAUNDERS: Were you told to keep away?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, it was part of the bargain, when Rose and I agreed to separate, that she should have the child and that I was not to interfere. If I'd even started seeing Pamela, I'd have been accused of interfering. So now I haven't the least desire to see her. God knows what nonsense Rose has put into her head by this time.

PARSONS *enters with telegram on tray.*

SAUNDERS: You can't *put* nonsense into girls' heads. They have their own nonsense-making plant there, always working at full pressure.

PARSONS: A telegram, my lord.

*As LORD KETTLEWELL gives exclamation of dismay, after reading telegram.*

SAUNDERS: What's the matter?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly* to PARSONS): I don't know why this telegram has taken such a devil of a time reaching me. But tell Briggs to meet the twelve-twenty-five train. For Mrs. Lancicourt. And we shall want an extra place at lunch.

PARSONS: Very good, your lordship.

*Goes out.*

SAUNDERS: Hilda Lancicourt?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Hell's bells—yes. (*Throwing telegram on desk.*) Coming on the twelve-twenty-five, to chase me into corners and ask me what the blazes I meant by my letter.

SAUNDERS: I hope you've ordered a good lunch. We shall need it.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I've half a mind to bolt for it.

SAUNDERS: Come, come, you mustn't bolt your lunch.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Why shouldn't I clear out? I didn't ask her to come here, did I? Why should she come here? That's the trouble with women, they're so damned inconsiderate.

SAUNDERS (*ironically*): Quite.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I've enough financial worries now without having any other kind. I used to think women were only like that if one were married to 'em. But now I know they're even worse if you're not married to 'em. Rose never gave me half the trouble that Hilda Lancicourt's given me. But I was ten years younger then and didn't know.

SAUNDERS: One ought to get to know these things first, and then marry afterwards.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, if she will come here, she'll have to take the consequences, that's all.

SAUNDERS: That's what she's come to take.

*The faint noise of a car is outside.*

(*Moving window.*) Hello, what's that? She can't be here already, can she?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, of course not. It's probably Gurney. He's driving down and due now. Or it might be old Lady Knightsbridge. She telephoned this morning to say she might come over.

SAUNDERS: Is she coming too? Well, she can't be coming here for nothing. What does that heart of oak want?

LORD KETTLEWELL: I don't know, but you can depend on it she wants something. Either she'll make me an offer for the teaspoons or try to persuade me to buy a second-hand car from one of her sons or nephews or nieces. Since old Knightsbridge died and left them nothing but arrears of income tax, the whole family, with Lady Knightsbridge as M.F.H., goes hunting commissions and percentages and tips. For sheer damned impudence, give me these Norman conquerors on the make.

SAUNDERS: One half the family tries to sell you something. If you say you can't afford to buy, they promptly hand you and your reputation over to the other half of the family, the gossip writers. And then you learn the real meaning of the phrase—blood will tell.

PARSONS *appears, a little flustered.*

PARSONS: My lord.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, who is it, Parsons?

PARSONS: Your lordship, a young person—wishes to speak to you.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*irritably*): Don't be idiotic. A young person! Do you mean, a young man or a young woman?

PARSONS: Well—the fact is, your lordship—I hadn't quite time to ascertain which.

SAUNDERS: About how long does it take you, as a rule, to ascertain, Parsons?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, what's the use of coming to tell me there's somebody wants to see me, and you don't know the name. You don't even know the sex.

PARSONS: Very sorry, your lordship, but in some of these cases it's difficult to tell—if you haven't much time. But I rather think it's a young woman, your lordship.

SAUNDERS: I'm getting curious.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, get her name and find out what she wants.

PARSONS: Very good, your lordship. (*Goes out.*)

SAUNDERS: You really can't blame the poor fellow for not knowing the sex of callers, these days. I get devilish puzzled myself.

LORD KETTLEWELL: So do I.

SAUNDERS: It's a curious paradox, Richard. We're told the world's getting more and more sex-ridden, and yet all the time it's harder and harder to tell the difference between the sexes. The more sex there is about, the less there is of it.

PARSONS *appears and announces impressively.*

PARSONS: Miss Pamela. (*Retiring and holding the doors open.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*jumping up, and staring at door*): What!

SAUNDERS (*also rising*): No, it can't be.

PAMELA *appears in the doorway. She is dressed in a very dingy and masculine fashion, dirty sweater, shorts, etc., with a large black beret. She stands for a moment, coolly surveying both men, who are gaping at her.*

PARSONS *goes out and closes the doors very softly.*

PAMELA: I seem to know both of you vaguely by sight. Which is my father?

SAUNDERS (*in mock alarm*): I'm not.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*suddenly bursting out*): Look here, do you mean to tell me you're my daughter—Pamela?

PAMELA: I do. How d'you do, father? You know, you're quite different from what I remembered of you. Much smaller.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*who has not yet recovered*): Much smaller!

PAMELA (*firmly*): Much smaller.

LORD KETTLEWELL: So you're Pamela, are you? Well, I'll be damned.

PAMELA: I don't know why you should be so surprised.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Seeing that you have arrived here, and insist upon being my daughter, may I ask why you're wandering about the countryside in that ridiculous get-up?

PAMELA: It's not ridiculous. It's very sensible. Only of course it's not meant to have any feminine charm.

SAUNDERS: I'm glad you've reassured me on that point. I was beginning to wonder if I'd lost touch.

PAMELA: I admit these clothes are rather dirty. But I've been travelling in them. You see, I've just come back from the U.S.S.R.

LORD KETTLEWELL: From Russia?

PAMELA: Yes, from Russia.

SAUNDERS: Ah, you've been touring, eh?

PAMELA (*severely*): Certainly not. We've no time to waste in mere touring.

SAUNDERS: I beg your pardon.

PAMELA: I went to Russia from Oxford as the representative of the Oxford Proletcult——

LORD KETTLEWELL (*disgusted*): Oxford Proletcult!

SAUNDERS: Be quiet, Richard. If there has to be Proletcult, I'm glad—as an old Oxford man—to know that Oxford has one. I hope it beats Cambridge.

PAMELA: I've been there three months—working.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Working! Why, what could *you* do?

PAMELA: All sorts of things. The last job I had was doing psycho-technical research and proletcult leisure organisation in the Red October Candy Factory. I'm a communist, of course.

SAUNDERS (*faintly*): Oh, of course.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Rubbish!

PAMELA: Why rubbish? I'm a communist, and I warn you both, here and now, that I regard you as members of an effete governing class.

SAUNDERS: Not me. The class I belong to doesn't govern. It's only effete.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): And I'm not effete.

SAUNDERS (*fascinated*): This is very odd. Did you say—you worked in the Black November Candy Factory?

PAMELA: The Red October Candy Factory. It's a wonderful organisation. Only—I never really liked the sweets they made, which was rather a pity.

SAUNDERS: I call it a downright shame.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*brooding*): Can't understand what your mother's been doing to let you drift into this.

PAMELA: Mother had nothing to do with it. Why should she? *Your* mother didn't turn you into a capitalist exploiter.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Don't be ridiculous.

PAMELA: I'm not being. As a matter of fact, mother wants me to go on the stage.

LORD KETTLEWELL: She would.

PARSONS *enters*.

PARSONS: My lord.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Now what is it?

PARSONS: Beg pardon, your lordship, but there's another—er—person who seems to have come with this—er—with Miss Pamela.



PAMELA (*coolly*): Oh yes, that's Comrade Staggles. (To PARSONS.) Tell him to come here.

PARSONS, *after glancing at LORD KETTLEWELL, goes out.*

Comrade Staggles was in Russia with us, and he wasn't doing anything so I brought him along with me.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*with irony*): Very good of you.

PAMELA: He wanted to come because he thought he'd like to poke about the house—he's never been in a big house—and perhaps write something on the social economy of the wealthier bourgeoisie. He's quite clever in his own way. (PARSONS *opens doors.*) Here he is.

COMRADE STAGGLES *enters, a very dingy, sullen-looking young man. He has a large book under his arm, which he frequently reads when not actually talking. He has a surprisingly high-pitched almost squeaky voice, very unpleasant to listen to.*

STAGGLES (*to PAMELA. Ignoring the other two*): I've not had a proper look at the place yet, but what I've seen already, if you ran it as they ran that communal farm we saw near Smolensk, you could put about a hundred and twenty workers in here. You'd have to pull down those pillars and that big staircase in the entrance hall, but they're only bourgeois show. I haven't seen the kitchen yet, but you could easily put in lavatories where that greenhouse is round the other side. Say—sixty men workers, forty women——

SAUNDERS (*with mock interest*): Do you think that's quite enough women?

STAGGLES (*seriously*): No, perhaps not. All right then, sixty men workers and sixty women——

SAUNDERS: That's better. And what about blowing up the front gates? Would that be difficult?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Just a minute, before you resume your survey. Don't you think, Pamela, you'd better introduce this gentleman——

STAGGLES (*indignantly*): I'm not a gentleman.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I beg your pardon. Don't you think you'd better introduce your friend——

STAGGLES (*correcting him*): Comrade.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Comrade then.

SAUNDERS (*to STAGGLES*): I congratulate you. I like a stickler for etiquette. Too much unconventionality about, nowadays.

PAMELA: Comrade Staggles—my father, Lord Kettlewell.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*with irony*): I'm delighted to make your acquaintance.

STAGGLES (*with a nod to LORD KETTLEWELL—sullenly*): Hello.

PAMELA: And this is——

SAUNDERS (*rising*): Churton Saunders. (*Bowing.*) How d'you do?—I mean—(*With a nod.*) Hello.

STAGGLES: How d' you do?

SAUNDERS: Thank you.

PAMELA (*staring at SAUNDERS*): I remember now. I knew you when I was a little girl. They used to call you Chuffy.

SAUNDERS: They did. And they still do. It's one of the last relics of a rapidly vanishing civilisation.

When I'm called Chuffy for the last time, you'll hear the death-knell of the old, stupid, comfortable, beautiful England.

PAMELA: Good!

STAGGLES: It can't happen too soon.

SAUNDERS: Why?

STAGGLES: Well, what's your stupid, comfortable, beautiful old England done for me?

SAUNDERS (*looking him over*): I'm afraid that argument's too good for me.

STAGGLES (*to PAMELA*): I want to look at the house again. I tried to get some information out of the manservant in there, but he's got all the prejudices of his parasitic class.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'm delighted to hear it. I feel inclined to raise his wages. But if you want to see the house, Mr. Saunders will show it to you now. (*Grimly.*) You might not have another opportunity.

SAUNDERS (*rising*): This way, Comrade Staggles. I'll show you the house—and all my prejudices too, if you like.

*They go out.*

LORD KETTLEWELL (*sharply*): Now, Pamela, what are you doing here?

PAMELA: I've come to stay.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Has your mother sent you here?

PAMELA: Of course not.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Why of course not?

PAMELA: Well, to begin with, mother doesn't just send me to places. I'm not a parcel.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Did she know you were coming here?

PAMELA: I told her—by wire—I'd decided to stay with you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Then you'd better send her another wire—to say you're not staying with me.

PAMELA: Do you mean—you don't want me to stay?

LORD KETTLEWELL: That's it—exactly.

PAMELA: Oh!—I see.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Shocked?

PAMELA (*with a short laugh*): Do you know, I believe I am—a little.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'm glad to hear it. As a member of an effete governing class, a specimen of the feeble and declining bourgeoisie, it gives me a certain pleasure to find that I'm still capable of shocking a bright young communist from Oxford.

PAMELA: I don't think that's a very good sort of pleasure, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'm not sentimental—not the kind of man who allows his womenfolk to twist him round their little fingers—and I don't pretend to be. You're my daughter, true—but the fact remains that actually to me you're nothing but a strange young woman who insists upon talking communist jargon at me. And if you stay here, you'll be a nuisance.

PAMELA (*sitting down*): Then I think I'll be a nuisance.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You realise I'm telling you as plainly as I can—I don't want you here. Of course I can't have you turned out——

PAMELA: Can't you? Why not?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*climbing down*): Look here, Pamela, don't be a little fool. You can't stay where you're not wanted. I'm hard up——

PAMELA: Hard up! Don't be absurd. You're terribly rich.

LORD KETTLEWELL: In theory I'm very rich. And on paper. But actually I'm rather hard up, and before the day's out, I may be worse off still. But for all that, if it's money you want . . .

PAMELA: It isn't. Besides, mother's very well off now.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Your mother! Nonsense!

PAMELA: It isn't. She's just sold her business to the stores—Harridges—they wanted the building too—got thousands for it, and has invested all the money.

LORD KETTLEWELL: What in?

PAMELA: I don't know. But she's delighted about it. So you see it isn't money. I came here to stay with you simply because I wanted to see what it would be like staying with you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: The bloated capitalist at home, eh?

PAMELA (*rising*): You're out of date, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, and so is the bloated capitalist. He's deflated now.

PAMELA: We don't talk like that any more. To us you're simply the representative of an antiquated crumbling system, and you'll have to be swept away with it when we tidy up. It's the system that's given you all this wealth and power.

LORD KETTLEWELL: All which wealth and power?

PAMELA: Well, after all, you're not shovelling coal or driving a tractor, are you?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, and I wouldn't be shovelling coal or driving a tractor under communism either. Not a bit of it. I'd take care of that. If we'd communism, there'd still be room at the top.

PAMELA: You wouldn't have all this. You'd have to work hard——

LORD KETTLEWELL: I like working hard.

PAMELA: And you wouldn't be able to grab all these luxuries for yourself.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, but I might have one luxury that's worth all the rest put together.

PAMELA: What's that?

LORD KETTLEWELL: The one some of your Russian friends have got, something we all enjoy more than rich food and drink and fine clothes and big cars and boxes at the theatre—power. If you've got the luxury of power, you can easily do without the smaller luxuries. Just remember that.

PAMELA: I hadn't thought of that. Father, you're not a fool, are you? Mother was right.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Your mother often is right. Within her limits, she's a very good judge of character.

PAMELA: She thinks I'm very obstinate—like you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh, I dare say you've got a will of your own. But look here, I can't turn you out, neck and crop. But will you go now—as a favour to me—and perhaps come back some other time.

ACT I

THE ROUNDABOUT

PAMELA: Yes, if you'll tell me truthfully why you want to get rid of me so quickly.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—well—you see, I'm worried. Business.

PAMELA (*shaking her head*): Not good enough.

LORD KETTLEWELL *impatiently sits at desk*.

SAUNDERS *enters*.

SAUNDERS: I've left Comrade Staggles taking notes in one of the bathrooms. I think it's the first he's seen. I've just seen your bag, Pamela. It's quite a civilised bag, isn't it? Not as proletarian as I'd hoped. I thought you'd just have had some corduroy pyjamas in a string bag. I had it sent up to a spare bedroom.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*rising*): You had her bag taken up? Chuffy, you're a meddlesome ass. (*He marches out into the garden.*)

SAUNDERS: I strongly object to being called a meddlesome ass. What have you been doing to him?

PAMELA: He doesn't want me to stay here, and he won't tell me why. Can you tell me?

SAUNDERS: Why should you imagine I knew?

PAMELA: You have such a knowing look. I'm sure you've spent years and years just being in the know about people, haven't you?

SAUNDERS: Now I come to think of it—I have. It's been almost my sole occupation.

PAMELA: Disgusting.

SAUNDERS: Oh!

PAMELA: You know, Mr. Chuffy, strictly as a

person, you can't altogether be disliked, but as a social-economic type there's no excuse for you at all.

SAUNDERS: Then don't think of me as a social-economic type.

PAMELA: I can't help it. I'm sorry—but, you see, you're simply a parasite.

SAUNDERS (*cheerfully*): Of course I am. I've been calling myself one for years and years.

PAMELA: But don't you mind?

SAUNDERS: Not much. After all, I flatter myself I'm a particularly pleasant parasite. I keep lots of people in a good temper. But of course that won't prevent you and your friends from turning a machine-gun on me one of these days, will it?

PAMELA: No, I'm afraid not.

SAUNDERS (*taking her hand*): I can only hope that this fair and friendly hand will be the one to pull the trigger.

PAMELA (*solemnly*): That's not likely. You see, I'm on the cultural side. I haven't done any army work. But a girl I knew in Russia was in the machine-gun corps of the Red Army. Her name was Sonia. She had the loveliest soft dark eyes you ever saw, and was a terribly nice girl.

SAUNDERS: She sounds charming. Perhaps I shall be lucky enough to be executed by Sonia. The last thing I shall see will be her lovely soft dark eyes looking at me along the barrel of the gun.

PAMELA: I hope she misses.

SAUNDERS: I don't think I shall care very much. I'm



an Edwardian. I was really enjoying life at a time just before you were born—though that's a mere coincidence of course—and this new world has nothing to do with me. In a few years, there probably won't be a good club left, or a decent pair of spats, or a real restaurant, or a pretty silly woman with nice clothes, or any conversation worth calling conversation. No, no—better dead.

PAMELA: Mr. Chuffy, you're a period piece, and you shall have a prominent place in one of our first Proletarian Museums.

SAUNDERS: Edwardian idler—well-preserved specimen of—— All right. Is it a bargain?

PAMELA: Not unless you tell me why my father wants to get rid of me.

SAUNDERS: I don't know that I can.

PAMELA: Do you mean that you can't or you won't?

SAUNDERS: Whichever you prefer.

PAMELA: You might as well be quite frank. I'm completely unshockable.

SAUNDERS: Yes, *you* may be, but I'm not. You must make allowances for my extra years, all tender years.

PAMELA: Is there somebody coming here that he doesn't want me to meet?

SAUNDERS: There's somebody coming here he doesn't want to meet himself.

PAMELA: A woman, his mistress, of course. I think that's very weak of him.

SAUNDERS: Very.

PAMELA: And I do think too that if he's going to be weak with women, he might have kept the family on.

SAUNDERS: He was saying something like that himself, just before you came. It must be in the air.

PAMELA: Of course, under any decent and rational social system——

SAUNDERS: I know, I know. There'd be none of this. There'd be none of anything that one didn't happen to like. Meanwhile, under this present indecent and irrational social system, the lady is due to arrive here in a few minutes' time. She'll be here for lunch.

PAMELA: And I—as the daughter of the house—will be here to receive her.

COMRADE STAGGLES *enters. He is reading.*

SAUNDERS: You couldn't do anything that would entertain me more. You might get Comrade Staggles here to help you.

STAGGLES (*looking up*): I don't propose to help anybody.

PAMELA: Don't be rude, Comrade Staggles.

STAGGLES: I'm not. I'm simply speaking the truth. You wouldn't have said that to me yesterday.

PAMELA: Of course I would.

STAGGLES: No, you wouldn't. You're beginning to be influenced already by this bourgeois atmosphere. You'd better watch yourself. (*Moving towards the window.*)

PAMELA: That's stupid.

STAGGLES: I'm never stupid. (*Goes out into the garden still reading.*)

SAUNDERS: A heart of gold, I dare say. By the way, seeing that all barriers are down, might I ask if you and our friend, the Comrade there, stand in any particular relationship to one another?

PAMELA: Comrade Staggles and I are fellow-workers in a great cause, that's all. We have no other relationship.

SAUNDERS: I heartily congratulate you.

PAMELA: It's not altogether his fault. Comrade Staggles is a highly sexed type and when he's not working hard, he longs for a full rich love life.

SAUNDERS: Then he must be kept working at all costs. The very thought of his rich love life seems peculiarly nauseating.

PAMELA (*confidentially*): It does rather, doesn't it? I've often felt that. But I'm sorry for Comrade Staggles. He falls in love—well not exactly that——

SAUNDERS: No, just falls—without the love.

PAMELA: Yes, he falls all over the place. The minute he sees anybody the least bit attractive. He'll probably get into trouble here with somebody—if he's in the mood.

SAUNDERS: He must be kept out of the mood. He eats, I suppose? I'm thinking about lunch.

PAMELA: Yes, Comrade Staggles eats rather a lot. But he doesn't notice it much.

SAUNDERS: Does he drink?

PAMELA: Anything.

SAUNDERS: What about you?

PAMELA: I don't drink much. But I eat *and* notice. And sometimes I'm frightfully greedy. I always am with raspberries and cream.

SAUNDERS: I am with plovers' eggs. I once stole seven.

LORD KETTLEWELL *enters up from the garden.*

LORD KETTLEWELL (*very crossly*): I don't know what the devil's the matter with everything and everybody this morning. Gurney ought to have been here half an hour ago and hasn't turned up yet—just when I want him. (*To PAMELA.*) Look here, do you still insist on staying on?

PAMELA (*sweetly*): Yes, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, you'll oblige me by having lunch in the library upstairs, you and your decaying friend.

PAMELA: Certainly not. I'm surprised at your suggesting such a thing, father. I never lunch upstairs. I'm far too old for that.

LORD KETTLEWELL: It isn't a question of your age—

PAMELA: I consider it my duty—as the daughter of the house—to receive your guests for you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Don't talk rubbish. You arrive here, looking like a mechanic in a third-rate garage—drop clean out of the blue—I haven't seen you for years—you don't know me—and then you have the impertinence to tell me not only that you're staying on here unasked but that it's your duty to receive my guests. I never heard such impudent bosh.

PAMELA: I'm afraid you must be very worried about something, father, or you wouldn't talk like this.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I *am* worried. I'm worried about half a dozen different things, every one of 'em going wrong as fast as it can.

PAMELA: Then you'll find it a great help having a daughter here to see you through.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I won't. You're only an extra worry. Now—be a sensible girl—and lunch upstairs or go and picnic in the garden or go off for the day or something.

PAMELA: Certainly not. If you don't let me lunch downstairs with you, I shall come and pull faces at you all through the window. (*Moving towards the door.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*disgusted*): Oh—go to blazes!

PAMELA (*turning at door*): I shall go to my room. (*Winking at SAUNDERS as she goes out.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*growling*): Impudent young devil! Can't get rid of her.

SAUNDERS (*lighting a cigarette*): Richard, you don't know an amusing daughter when you see one.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Amusing daughter! Sometimes you talk like a lunatic, Chuffy. I don't want her here. She's going to be a hell of a nuisance. To begin with—look at her. The very sight of her's going to turn me into a laughing-stock. Old Lady Knightsbridge's eyes will be popping out of her head. She'll be telephoning the family contingent of gossip writers before tea.

SAUNDERS: Trunk calls too. At your expense.

LORD KETTLEWELL: That's bad enough, but then there's Hilda Lancicourt on her way here, ready to make a devil of a scene at a moment's notice. And here

I'm landed with a grown-up daughter on the premises. What sort of a situation's that? I call it indecent.

SAUNDERS: No, not indecent. But shall we say—adapted from the French?

LORD KETTLEWELL: It's all right for you, Chuffy. I know you of old. You don't give a damn so long as you're amused.

SAUNDERS: Well, you needn't worry, Richard. I shall be amused.

LORD KETTLEWELL: But I don't want to amuse you. You might be serious for a minute.

SAUNDERS: What do you want me to be serious about? About you or Hilda Lancicourt or Lady Knightsbridge or Pamela or Comrade Staggles? Can't be done. Besides, I hinted something to the girl—and she's no fool. She won't mind. She'll be all on your side. You've got a possible ally there.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You're not only a lunatic, Chuffy, you're an obscene lunatic. Who wants his daughter—even if she's just come from Russia and wears trousers and is ready to blow up the House of Commons—as an ally in a situation of this kind? You haven't an elementary sense of decency.

SAUNDERS: That's because I'm not like you—a married man.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'm not a married man. But I'd a thousand times rather be a married man again than get into messes like this. What a nice amusing lunch we're going to have! And what a fine dignified figure I'm going to cut! And on top of that, the market's going to hell, and young Gurney's gone and got lost.

ACT I

THE ROUNDABOUT

COMRADE STAGGLES *saunters in from the garden book in hand*. LORD KETTLEWELL *sees him, and turns away*.

STAGGLES: Where's Pamela?

SAUNDERS: She went to her room. Why?

STAGGLES: Wanted to talk to her. (*Beginning to stroll off.*)

SAUNDERS: Made any interesting discoveries?

STAGGLES (*without turning round*): Yes. (*Goes out again.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*at desk—glaring after him*): Did you ever see such a lout as that?

SAUNDERS: I must admit the Comrade has a manner rather than manners.

LORD KETTLEWELL: For two pins I'd kick him out.

SAUNDERS: You can't do that. After all, your own daughter brought him here.

LORD KETTLEWELL: My own daughter! She's a stranger to me.

SAUNDERS: She won't be one long.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I've asked her to go and she won't. That's our relationship at present.

SAUNDERS: It wouldn't surprise me if before long you're not asking her to stay.

LORD KETTLEWELL: It might not surprise you, but it will surprise me.

SAUNDERS: And then when you want her to stay, probably she won't. And that'll be that. As for Comrade Staggs there, the best way of paying him off is to treat him nicely. He expects to be kicked out, probably he's

always been kicked out of somewhere, and if you treat him nicely, he'll be dreadfully puzzled and disappointed. Already, he doesn't know what to make of me.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): I could give him some hints about you.

*Enter FARRINGTON GURNEY, a young man in his later twenties. He has an excellent opinion of himself and an elaborate military-society manner.*

GURNEY: Good morning, sir. Sorry if I'm late.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Latel Of course you're late. What happened to you?

GURNEY: Sorry, sir, but really wasn't my fault. Frightfully bad show on the road. Ditched the bus in that narrow turning just this side of the village.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I thought you could drive a car, Gurney.

GURNEY: It was either ditching her or smashing. Two frightful cads in the foulest old rattletrap you've ever seen came tearing round that corner on the wrong side. Absolute lunatic driving. I was lucky to get out of it at the expense of a bent mudguard and ditching her. I'd like to report those stinkers to the police. They want watching anyhow. Looked and jabbered and behaved like a pair of Bolshie agitators. I've brought Mollinson's report along, sir. (*Hands it over.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL: That's what I want. I'll glance through it now. Oh—Chuffy—I'm sorry. This is Farrington Gurney. Mr. Churton Saunders. (*Goes out looking at report.*)

SAUNDERS: So you nearly had a smash, eh?



GURNEY (*taking cigarette from his own case*): Closest thing you ever saw. No excuse for it. Believe they did it on purpose. They stopped for a minute and jeered. If they didn't actually put out their foul tongues at me, they looked as if they did. (*Lighting cigarette.*) If there's a spot going before lunch, I wish they'd hurry up with it, I want something to wash the taste of those people out of my mouth.

SAUNDERS: A bad pair, eh?

GURNEY: Complete untouchables.

SAUNDERS: Male or female?

GURNEY: God knows! Neuter, I'd say.

SAUNDERS: Can you describe them?

GURNEY: I'd really rather not try, sir. I want to forget them until some bright happy morning when the police might like me to identify them, preferably after they've both been done to death with a particularly blunt instrument. (*COMRADE STAGGLES comes sauntering in from garden.*) I hope, sir, these sordid themes don't fascinate you, because I'd like to change the beastly subject. (*Catching sight of COMRADE STAGGLES.*) My God!

STAGGLES: So it's you again, is it?

GURNEY: Me again! Of course it's me again. But the point is, why is it you again? (*To SAUNDERS.*) What's this fellow doing here?

SAUNDERS (*enjoying himself*): Oh, I must introduce you. This is Comrade Staggles—Mr. Farrington Gurney. Comrade Staggles came here with Lord Kettlewell's daughter, Pamela.

GURNEY: Lord Kettlewell's daughter! I never knew he had a daughter.

SAUNDERS: Well, he has.

GURNEY: But how could he come here with her? He wasn't with her when I saw him.

STAGGLES: Yes, I was. She was driving the car. It's her car.

GURNEY: Lord Kettlewell's daughter—that—that——! (*Go SAUNDERS.*) Look here, this is a joke, isn't it?

SAUNDERS: Only incidentally.

STAGGLES: Pamela brought me here. I was in Russia with her. We're fellow-workers.

GURNEY: Russial Fellow-workers!

STAGGLES: You seem to be as stupid about taking this in as you are about driving a car.

GURNEY: Driving a car. My hat!—if I hadn't been able to drive a car better than most people, you wouldn't be here now. You'd be in hospital—if any decent hospital would admit you. Look what you did! Tearing round a corner on the wrong side of the road——

STAGGLES: We didn't. It was you who wanted all the road to yourself, you—you fat bourgeois.

GURNEY (*horrified*): Fat! Fat! What the devil do you mean, you Bolshie cad? I'm not fat.

STAGGLES (*happily jeering*): Your mind's fat already. And soon—very soon—your body'll be fat, if it has time to before the social revolution comes. Just because you were driving a big expensive car, a typical bloodsucking parasite's car, you thought you could have all the road to yourself.

GURNEY: You two hogs came round on the wrong side. That twopenny parcel of scrap iron of yours ought to have a road to itself. You're not fit to be driving along with civilised people. Why didn't you stay in Russia? With that shirt. My God!—that shirt ought never to have been allowed to leave Russia.

STAGGLES: Typical specimen of humour from a bourgeois parasite.

GURNEY: Look here, Comrade What's-your-name—not so much of the parasite. I'm no more a parasite than you are. If it comes to that, what do you do? You don't seem to be jolly well encumbered with any picks and shovels. You don't even take the trouble to have decent manners. And if you want to do something for the good of the what's-it—the community—go and have a shave.

STAGGLES: Is that your idea of decent manners?

SAUNDERS: He has you there.

GURNEY: Yes, I suppose I'm beginning to talk like a cad, too. (STAGGLES *shrugs his shoulders, sits down as far away as possible and begins to read.*) But is it true (*lowering voice*) that other—er—creature's really Lord Kettlewell's daughter?

SAUNDERS: Yes, Pamela Kettlewell. You'll see her soon.

GURNEY: That's cheerful. (LORD KETTLEWELL *enters.*) Was the report all right, sir?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*gloomily*): The report was all wrong. Couldn't be worse. Nothing could be worse.

SAUNDERS: Though, of course, they will be soon.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You don't know what's going to turn up next.

*Enter PARSONS.*

PARSONS: Lady Knightsbridge, your lordship.

*Holds door open, then withdraws. LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE is a determined elderly woman, shabby but faintly distinguished, and at once pushing and vague.*

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: How d'you do? Am I late?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, you're not late.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: So sorry if I am, but I stopped at Colonel Pomperly's to ask him if he'd care to sell those two enormous Elizabethan beds he has there—I know a woman who wants some—and poor Colonel Pomperly's as deaf as a post and for the first five minutes I can't imagine *what* he seemed to think I was talking about. All he appeared to hear was "bed."

LORD KETTLEWELL: I think you know Churton Saunders, don't you?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Of course I do. How d'you do? Didn't Gerald come round to see you the other day?

SAUNDERS: Yes, he tried to sell me a car.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I hope you bought one from him.

SAUNDERS: No, I didn't. I don't want a car. I haven't any money for one. Besides, I can't drive.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I could put my hand on a *most* reliable chauffeur for you.

SAUNDERS: I can't afford a chauffeur.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Neither can I. But when I'm down here, I borrow the gardener, and when I'm in town, Millicent lends me hers. He's not really hers—he belongs to the firm——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—is Lady Millicent with a firm now?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Yes, something to do with electric-light fittings. All very new and hideous and wonderfully expensive—you know, those inhuman things, all glass and corners—really rather like Millicent herself—no wonder she's so successful with them. (*To GURNEY.*) How d'you do? I do know you, don't I? Didn't I ask you once to get poor Claud into rubber or something?

GURNEY: It was tea planting, and there was nothing doing.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: So it was—tea. I suppose there *is* nothing doing in rubber planting, is there?

GURNEY: Nothing. If anything, it's worse than tea.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Isn't there anything poor Claud could go and plant out there? Rice or curry or opium or *anything*? Poor boy, I'm sure he's ready by this time to plant *anything*. And he and Aubrey don't get on. You know of course that Aubrey makes a lot of money now by writing gossip for the *Sunday Chatterer*?

SAUNDERS: Do we not.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: By the way, will one of you remind me to ring up Aubrey after lunch. I promised the poor boy I would.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Not on business, I hope.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Oh no—not exactly—though he's always glad to have anything I pick up. The poor boy gets so tired of going to cocktail parties for his column. He almost lives now on olives and salted almonds.

LORD KETTLEWELL: We're rather dull down here, I'm afraid. There won't be anything for Aubrey and the *Chatterer*.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Well, you never know what might turn up that he could use.

PARSONS *enters*.

PARSONS: Mrs. Lancicourt.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*significantly*): Dear me, what a pleasant surprise!

MRS. LANCICOURT *enters*. *A smart, handsome, rather hard woman in her thirties.*

MRS. LANCICOURT (*establishing intimacy at once*): Richard, it's the last—the very last—time I shall come down by that wretched train. So crowded. So tiresome. Next time I shall certainly come down by car. Oh—how d'you do, Lady Knightsbridge?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: How d'you do? You're quite right about the train. Ever since people have taken to walking at the week-end, the Saturday trains are crowded out.

MRS. LANCICOURT: How d'you do, Mr. Saunders? Such a time since we met.

SAUNDERS: Ages, isn't it?

MRS. LANCICOURT: I was beginning to think you and Richard had quarrelled, never seeing you down here. He doesn't even talk about you.

SAUNDERS: Nobody does. That's why conversation's not what it was.

PARSONS *enters with cocktails, which he hands round and then goes out.*

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*to* MRS. LANCICOURT): Do you know anybody who wants to let their country place? I want one for some rich South Americans that Betty Brewis found for me.

MRS. LANCICOURT: What sort of country place?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: It must have hundreds of bedrooms. Why, I can't imagine, unless South Americans make it a rule to sleep in a different part of the house every night.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I shall probably want to let this soon. Not big enough, I suppose?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Not for these South Americans. But no doubt I could find you somebody for it. You must give me the particulars after lunch. By the way, is this studious young man (*indicating* STAGGLES) a member of this party or does he simply come here to read?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Sorry. My fault. This is—er—Mr. Staggles. Lady Knightsbridge. Mrs. Lancicourt.

STAGGLES *half rises, book in hand, gives them each a sharp nod, then relapses into chair.*

LORD KETTLEWELL: Staggles has just returned from Russia.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Ah—that accounts for the dazed look. (*To STAGGLES.*) And so you escaped from those dreadful Bolsheviks?

STAGGLES: No. Why should I?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Yes, I'm told it's perfectly safe for anyone to go and stay there now.

STAGGLES: Then you were told wrong. It's still unsafe for bourgeois and enemies of the revolution.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*drily*): Indeed! Well, don't let us interrupt your reading. (*Turning away.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*to the ladies*): Staggles has been in Russia with my daughter.

GURNEY: My hat!—it's true then? I thought they were pulling my leg.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*sharply*): What do you mean, Gurney?

GURNEY: Sorry, sir, but those were the two people who ditched me. I recognised him. But I thought it was a joke when they said the other one was your daughter.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*not pleased*): Well, it isn't a joke?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: But I never knew you had a daughter, Lord Kettlewell.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, I have. Her name's Pamela.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*sweetly*): Yes, of course. Dear little Pamela.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*irritably*): I don't know why you should say that, Hilda. You never knew her. Besides, she isn't dear little Pamela at all. You'll soon see that for yourself.



ACT I

THE ROUNDABOUT

MRS. LANCICOURT: See that for myself?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes. She's here.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Here!

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Quite a surprise for you!

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): Quite a surprise. She arrived unexpectedly this morning with Comrade Stagglers here. Both from Russia. Both communists.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Communists, eh? Is there any money in it, because I'm looking for something for Agatha's younger girl—dreadfully plain, poor thing!

MRS. LANCICOURT: Too absurd, of course, Richard.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*savagely*): Yes, quite too absurd. Wait until you see her.

GURNEY (*softly*): My hat!—yes.

MRS. LANCICOURT: What do you mean, Richard?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: There's nothing the matter with the girl, is there?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Nothing the matter at all, except she looks and behaves like nothing on earth outside a dreary Russian film about collective farming. Wears trousers, a dirty blue sweater, and God knows what else!

MRS. LANCICOURT (*laughing, with a touch of malice*): Oh—poor Richard! What a daughter to be suddenly thrust upon you!

LORD KETTLEWELL: It's no responsibility of mine. I didn't bring the child up. If I had, there'd have been none of this nonsense.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I'm looking forward to seeing her trousers.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*enjoying herself*): To say nothing of the dirty blue sweater and the God-knows-what-elses! No, it's a shame to tease poor Richard. Lady Knightsbridge—Mr. Saunders—Mr. Gurney—you must promise not to laugh. Not a smile, whatever she looks like. Absurd child. (PARSONS *enters*.) We must try and make her feel at home.

PARSONS (*impressively*): Miss Pamela is coming down, your lordship, and luncheon is served.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Well, we'll wait for Miss Pamela. (*Commanding the situation*.) We'll wait for her. Now remember, everybody—you're not to laugh.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*groaning*): Damn it, Hilda! You're making it worse.

*They are all grouped in such a way as to leave a clear space before the door. PAMELA arrives and stands in the doorway. She is exquisitely turned out, looks very pretty, and has a charming assured manner.*

PAMELA (*after pausing a second*): Sorry if I'm late, father.

*The Curtain falls as she stands there smiling, and the rest, without stirring, gape at her.*

END OF ACT ONE

## ACT II

*The SCENE is the same as ACT I. Afternoon.*

*As the Curtain rises ALICE, a pretty parlourmaid, enters with coffee-tray, followed by PARSONS with tray of liqueurs: they place these on the table and move away as PAMELA enters followed by SAUNDERS. PARSONS and ALICE go out by the service door as PAMELA speaks.*

PAMELA (*confidentially*): Listen, will you do something for me?

SAUNDERS (*with mock conspiratorial air*): Delighted.

PAMELA: I'm going to get that woman out of this house this afternoon.

SAUNDERS: Mrs. Lancicourt?

PAMELA: Yes, of course. And I must do it before she gets hold of father.

SAUNDERS: She won't do that in a hurry. He's going to be very busy this afternoon. I can see it coming.

PAMELA: All the better. Now will you help?

SAUNDERS: I'll do anything except sing "The Red Flag."

PAMELA: You may have to do that before we've finished.

SAUNDERS: Is there anything less drastic I can do?

PAMELA: Yes. If you see a chance of my being left alone with her quite soon, get Lady Knightsbridge out of the way, will you? And keep out of the way yourself too, please.

SAUNDERS: All right. But you've got your work cut out.

PAMELA (*pouring out coffee*): We'll see.

LORD KETTLEWELL *enters with* MRS. LANCICOURT, *followed by* LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE *and* GURNEY. LORD KETTLEWELL *is embarrassed and therefore rather blustering.*

LORD KETTLEWELL: Ah—coffee. Well, Gurney, we've just time to swallow one small cup, that's all. I'm sorry, ladies, but you'll have to excuse us for an hour or so. Duty calls, eh, Gurney?

PAMELA *has poured out the coffee, GURNEY hands a cup to* LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LORD KETTLEWELL *hands cup to* MRS. LANCICOURT, PAMELA *hands cups to* SAUNDERS *and* GURNEY.

GURNEY: I'm afraid so, sir.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I must say, Richard, this is the very first time I ever remember your having business to transact in the middle of Saturday afternoon.

SAUNDERS: I think Pamela's conversation at lunch must have frightened him.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Everything frightens me nowadays. And the trouble about being a financier now is that it's just as hard work losing money as it is making it. In fact, it's harder work. The hours are longer.

PAMELA: You shouldn't be a financier.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I shan't be much longer.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Nobody's anything very long at a time now, are they? Very unsettling. But very amusing too. You know, I rather like it. My mother at my age was terribly bored—poor darling—but now I haven't time to get bored. My one objection to this new life is that it's dreadfully hard on the feet.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, Gurney—that report's waiting for us.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*maliciously*): Yes, Mr. Gurney. Hurry up. Lord Kettlewell doesn't like to be kept waiting on these busy afternoons.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*at the door*): Pamela, give Mrs. Lancicourt a liqueur.

*Goes out with GURNEY.*

PAMELA: Let me see, there's brandy, cointreau, and green chartreuse. Which will you have, Lady Knightsbridge?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I'll have the tiniest drop of green chartreuse, thank you, my dear. It's so expensive one hardly ever sees it nowadays.

PAMELA: Mrs. Lancicourt?

MRS. LANCICOURT: No, thank you.

PAMELA: What will you have, Mr. Saunders? Won't you help yourself?

SAUNDERS: Thank you. I think a little—just one tiny glass—of old brandy is indicated. One feels like it some days. And this—is one of the days. (*Helping himself.*) What about you, Pamela?

PAMELA: No, thank you. I don't drink.

SAUNDERS: I hope you haven't any views on the subject of drinking?

PAMELA: Only for myself. I don't like the taste and I don't like the effect. So why should I?

SAUNDERS: Why should you. I don't like to see girls drinking myself. (*Taking cigarette-box from table.*) Girls ought to be naturally inebriate. (*Passing the cigarettes round.*)

*All take one except PAMELA.*

MRS. LANCICOURT (*to PAMELA*): Aren't you having one?

PAMELA: No. I don't smoke.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Really? You don't smoke and you don't drink. You surprise me. I'd have thought a girl like you, just back from Russia, would have smoked and drunk everything you could lay hands on.

PAMELA: Oh, but it's not a bit like that in Russia, you know. The young Bolsheviks are very virtuous, quite austere, rather priggish in fact.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Dear me, they seem to have every form of unpleasantness in that poor country.

SAUNDERS: Yes, I always suspected it. What a country! It seems to me your only alternative there is between Sandford and Merton and Smith and Wesson. (*Pausing.*) Sorry you've not enjoyed that remark. Probably you don't know who Smith and Wesson are.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I don't. Are they like Swan and Edgar.

SAUNDERS: Not like Swan, but perhaps a little like Edgar. They make revolvers, or used to do, when I was a gunman.

ACT II

THE ROUNDABOUT

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*to PAMELA*): Tell me, my dear, what did you do in Russia?

SAUNDERS: Something that sounded terribly imposing, I remember.

PAMELA: I started with psycho-technical research in the Red October Candy Factory.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: It sounds very clever. What did you do?

PAMELA: Well, my part of the psycho-technical research was to draw a lot of diagrams and graphs to try and find out the best way of pasting labels on tins of caramels. I've got some of the caramels in my bag, if any of you'd like to try them. (*About to rise.*)

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Not for me, thank you. Somehow I've been off caramels for years now.

PAMELA: I must admit I don't care for these caramels very much. They taste of leather. A lot of things in Russia taste of leather. It's an awfully leathery country.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Dear child!

SAUNDERS: What about the other thing you did—the proletcult—what's it?

PAMELA: Proletcult leisure organization. I did that afterwards. That was just showing the Communist Youth how to play games and things. Only the games of course had to be class-conscious and proletarian and revolutionary. They'd never played Clumps—you know, Animal, Vegetable, Mineral—so I tried to invest a revolutionary clumps, and a girl called Rosa Something-off—who could speak a little English—helped me, and it wasn't bad. Only they argued and cheated an awful lot. Slavs *are* rather difficult, aren't they?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: So far as my limited experience goes I've found them practically impossible.

SAUNDERS: By the way, talking of being impossible, where is Comrade Staggles?

PAMELA: He disappeared when father was showing us that picture.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I thought I saw him as we came through, stretched out in a chair in the hall—snoring. He obviously drank too much at lunch.

SAUNDERS: Our friend, the Comrade, isn't used to lunching.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*coldly*): Obviously not.

PAMELA: Of course he isn't used to lunching. That's why you can't blame him. He's been under-nourished for years and years—just living on scraps in ghastly bed-sitting rooms—and so when we put all this rich food and drink into him, he can't stand up to it.

SAUNDERS: You could knock him down with a soufflé, eh?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Very noble of you, I'm sure, my dear Pamela, to stand up for your friend like that. You are just friends, I imagine.

PAMELA: Yes. Just friends.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Quite sufficient too.

SAUNDERS: Well, I think I'd better take a look at him. Lady Knightsbridge, I promised before lunch to remind you to ring up Aubrey.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: So you did.

SAUNDERS: Well, now I'm reminding you.

*Smiles as he goes out.*



LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*rising*): Yes, I must have a word with the poor boy.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Not about us, I hope.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: My dear, of course not. But what was it you told me about Helen Templecombe's cousin, the one who invented something?

MRS. LANCICOURT: It was Major Finchton-Grey-Finchton, and he's invented a tropical travelling suit.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Tropical travelling-suit, of course. Major Finchton-Grey-Finchton?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Yes. Absurd name.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Well, he must certainly take care not to add anything else to Finchton-Grey-Finchton or it will sound like the refrain of a popular ballad. You don't know if he wants anybody to sell the travelling-suits for him, do you, because I think Arthur's boy would do it very well. He's got a dreadful stammer—poor boy—but I'm told he's wonderful at cricket—or is it skating? Well, I'll tell Aubrey all about it. Probably he'll be able to get a photograph of this Major Grey-Finchton-Grey wearing his travelling-suit. It'll be a change from all those half-naked girls they're always putting in. One gets so tired of looking at their knees. In my time we knew the female knee was an ugly contraption and acted accordingly. (*Goes out.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT (*settling herself*): And now we can have a little talk.

PAMELA (*pleasantly*): Yes, we can be catty in comfort. (*Making herself quite comfortable.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT (*raising eyebrows*): Catty? I don't propose to be catty—as you call it. Do you?

PAMELA: No. Besides, I'm terribly out of practice. Nobody is catty in Russia. They're doggy, but not catty.

MRS. LANCICOURT: What I would like to do is to talk to you quite frankly for a few minutes—if you don't mind.

PAMELA: No, I like frank talks. They're great fun. People's technique varies so much.

MRS. LANCICOURT: You see—I'm an old friend of your father's——

PAMELA (*sweetly*): Yes?

MRS. LANCICOURT: And so I hope you won't mind what I'm going to say to you.

PAMELA (*thoughtfully*): That means you're going to say something unpleasant. Really, of course, I don't know father well enough to let his old friends say unpleasant things to me. But still—do please say anything you like.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*rather coldly*): Thank you. Of course you've not been here before, have you?

PAMELA: No, never.

MRS. LANCICOURT: What made you come—curiosity?

PAMELA: Not entirely. I was curious—of course.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Naturally. So you just looked in—so to speak—on your way back from Russia?

PAMELA: I did look in—yes. Just to see what it was like. If I decide that I like it, I shall stay on, of course.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I don't think I should stay on, if I were you.

PAMELA: Oh! Why?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Well, you see, I don't think your father wants you to stay on.

PAMELA (*sitting up with pretended indignation*): Mrs. Lancicourt, I think that's a terrible thing to say. My own father——

MRS. LANCICOURT: Well, after all, he hasn't seen you for years, has he?

PAMELA: That's not my fault, is it?

MRS. LANCICOURT: I don't know whose fault it is.

PAMELA: Do you know, I don't either. Isn't it absurd?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Oh—it's not so unusual nowadays. It amounts to this, you and your father are really strangers, you belong to entirely different worlds now, and—well——

PAMELA (*sweetly*): Yes, go on.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Well, since you force me to be candid, I must tell you that I think your presence here embarrasses him. And if you take my advice, you will go as soon as you can. If only for your own sake.

PAMELA (*thoughtfully*): I see.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I hope you don't mind my saying this. I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't seen at once that you were a girl one could be perfectly frank with. And then you see, being an old and very close friend of your father's, I notice things that you—practically a stranger to him—wouldn't notice.

PAMELA: Quite so. (*Ringing the bell.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT: What are you doing?

PAMELA: I'm ringing a bell. (*To PARSONS who enters.*)  
Is there a good train to London this afternoon?

PARSONS: Yes, miss, there's a good train at five to four.

PAMELA: And is there a car handy to take anybody down to the station?

PARSONS: Yes, miss. Briggs will have the car round at a moment's notice.

PAMELA: A train at five to four and a car for the station at a moment's notice. Thank you.

PARSONS: Can I clear now, miss?

PAMELA: No, just wait a few minutes.

PARSONS (*bowing*): Very good, miss.

*Goes out.*

MRS. LANCICOURT: Well, I must say you're behaving very sensibly.

PAMELA (*cheerfully*): Oh—I'm always very sensible about trains and cars and arrangements for travelling.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*smiling sweetly*): I didn't mean that. I think it's very sensible of you to go like this.

PAMELA (*coolly*): Oh—I'm not going.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*rising*): What!

PAMELA: No, I'm not going. I've suddenly decided to accept father's invitation to stay here. It's a delightful place.

MRS. LANCICOURT: But this is ridiculous. Why did you ask about trains?

PAMELA: I thought the information might be useful to us.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*angrily*): You surely haven't the impertinence to suggest that *I* should go?

PAMELA: No, why should I? It isn't *my* house. But I thought that if it *should* become embarrassing for you later, you might like to know when the train goes.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Why should it become embarrassing for me? It's you who are embarrassing your father.

PAMELA: So you said before. But—did he invite you down here to-day?

MRS. LANCICOURT: That is simply an impertinent question. I don't feel called upon to answer it. You had better ask your father.

PAMELA: All right. I will. (*Moving.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT: But kindly allow me to talk to him first.

*Quickly making a move towards the door as* COMRADE STAGGLES, *looking very tousled, as if just wakened after a too liberal lunch, enters.* MRS. LANCICOURT, *giving one look at him and making a slight gesture of disgust as she hurriedly passes in front of him, goes out.*

STAGGLES (*looking after her, then turning to PAMELA*): What's the matter with Mrs. What's-her-name? What does she want to hurry off like that for when I come?

PAMELA: Perhaps she was embarrassed. Did you say anything to her at lunch?

STAGGLES: Can't remember. I've had a nap since then. I think I paid her a compliment or two—you

know, told her she wasn't bad looking. That's what they like, isn't it, these bourgeois women?

PAMELA (*gravely*) That accounts for it then. She's been talking about you. I think you must have made an impression on her, Comrade Staggles. Perhaps she's a very impressionable woman.

STAGGLES: Well, she looks as if she might be. And that's how they ought to be, too—impressionable. I thought she gave me a look once or twice.

PAMELA: What are you going to do about it?

STAGGLES: Well, I feel in the humour for following it up.

PAMELA: I'd wait until she comes back again.

STAGGLES: Oh—I'm in no hurry. Besides, I've got a bit of a headache. That nap didn't do me any good. (*Sitting on settee and putting his legs up.*)

*Enter ALICE.*

ALICE: Can I clear away now, miss?

PAMELA: Yes, of course. Where is Mr. Saunders?

ALICE (*beginning to put things together*): I think I saw him going into the library, miss.

PAMELA *goes out*. STAGGLES *looks at* ALICE.

STAGGLES: I say, what's your name?

ALICE: Alice, sir.

STAGGLES: Mine's Herbert. (*Pausing for a reply, and when it doesn't come, repeats:*) Herbert.

ALICE (*still busy with the cups*): Yes, sir.

STAGGLES (*irritably*): Well, you needn't just say "Yes, sir," like that. How old are you?

ALICE (*demurely*): Twenty-two.

STAGGLES: Yes, I thought you were. I'm twenty-eight. (*Waiting for a reply.*) You don't like working here, do you?

ALICE (*brightening up*): Oh—yes, sir. It's a very good place.

STAGGLES (*jeering*): A very good place! You don't want to talk like that. Do you know what you are, Alice? You're a slave hugging your fetters.

ALICE (*tray in hand now*): Oh no, I'm not, sir.

STAGGLES (*taking one end of her tray with laborious amorousness*): But you're a very pretty slave, Alice. Do you know you're the prettiest girl I've seen to-day.

ALICE (*waiting to go*): Thank you, sir. (*Taking a step away.*)

STAGGLES: What's the good of just saying "Thank you, sir." Here you are—you're a girl, and a very pretty girl. And here am I—a young man—just Herbert Staggles—and I'm telling you that you're the prettiest girl I've seen to-day, I'm letting you know that you've attracted me, and you've nothing to say.

ALICE (*bewildered*): Yes, sir. (*Enter PARSONS.*) Please can I go now, sir?

PARSONS: That's right, Alice. I'll clear away these liqueurs.

ALICE *goes out.*

STAGGLES (*irritably*): Lot of damned nonsense!

PARSONS: I beg your pardon, sir. (*Collecting glasses and putting them on tray.*)

STAGGLES: Oh—nothing. And don't call me "sir."

PARSONS: And may I ask why not, sir?

STAGGLES: Because it sounds too servile and menial. I don't accept these class distinctions. We're equals.

PARSONS: In that case, sir, you mustn't tell me what I have to call you. If we're equals, I can call you what I like, sir.

STAGGLES: That's not a good argument to a communist. I suppose you know I'm a communist?

PARSONS: I gathered you were, sir.

STAGGLES: Shocks you, eh?

PARSONS: Not a bit, sir. Communism's all right for a young gentleman like yourself, but you'll get over it.

STAGGLES: I suppose you're a true blue Tory, aren't you?

PARSONS: I'm a democratic state socialist, sir, and have been these thirty years.

STAGGLES: That's no good. It won't work.

PARSONS: Pardon me, sir. But it's working now, here in England. (*Picks up tray.*)

STAGGLES: Yes, and look at the mess we're in. And the bigger mess we'll be in soon. Oh, I've got such a headache. I'm very thirsty.

PARSONS: I shall be pleased to get you a drink, sir. We have some very good barley-water flavoured with lemon. Very refreshing.

STAGGLES (*rising*): If you'll tell me where to go, I'll get it myself.

PARSONS: I'm afraid you can't do that, sir.



STAGGLES: Why can't I go myself to the kitchen or wherever the drink is and get it?

PARSONS: Because the staff would resent anybody who was staying in the house making an appearance in their quarters.

STAGGLES: Silly fools!

PARSONS: Now, sir, you must allow people to have their own rights and privileges. I'm afraid, sir, that's what you communists forget. (*Moves down L.*)

*Enter* LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE *briskly*.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: My nephew has just told me on the telephone that the first draws for the Guernsey Sweep are just coming through. (PARSONS *goes out with tray*.) Have you any tickets for the Guernsey Sweep, Mr. Staggers?

STAGGLES: What's the Guernsey Sweep?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Don't you know what the Guernsey Sweep is? Of course you've been in Russia. Well, it's the newest sweep and the biggest. Bigger than the Irish. They tell me you can't stir in Guernsey for the people they've had to take on to run this sweep.

STAGGLES (*fiercely*): Dope!

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: What's that?

STAGGLES: I say it's dope, that's what it is. Dope for the masses. Exploit them body and soul and then take their money away with this sweepstake dope.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Now, Mr. Staggers, I'm afraid I can't allow you to begin denouncing everything all over again.

STAGGLES: I shall keep on denouncing things until they come right.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*masterfully*): Well, I think you'd better go for a brisk walk round the grounds before you begin again. You look a bad colour to me. I fancy you've got a liver. What do you take in the morning?

STAGGLES: Nothing.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I thought as much. Take some salts with a cup of tea in the morning. And now you go for a brisk trot round. And don't eat any cake at tea. Now then!

STAGGLES (*rising*): Oh—well—it's not a bad idea.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: It's a very good idea, especially after the lunch you had. Off you go. (PARSONS *re-enters with cigarette-box*.) Have you any tickets in the sweep, Parsons? (*Takes cigarette from box*.)

PARSONS: Three, your ladyship.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I've five. And I expect to be lucky this time. An astrologer told one of my nieces that this sweep would bring me luck.

PARSONS (*lighting LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE's cigarette for her*): It's just the same with me, the very same, your ladyship. Mrs. Dobson—that's the cook here—can read the cards, and last night she told me there was money—big money—coming to me quite soon. If that isn't the sweep, what can it be, your ladyship?

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Well, it might be the cook making a mistake. I suppose they make mistakes with fortune telling just as they do with cooking.

PARSONS: She's a rare hand with the cards.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: She's a poor hand with pastry. Remind me not to take tart the next time I'm here. But I hope you're lucky.

PARSONS: Thank you, your ladyship. Something's beginning to tell me I shall be.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Something's always telling me, but so far it's told me wrong. What are you going to do if you win a prize? Retire to one of the quieter suburbs?

PARSONS: I've been working that out, your ladyship. And I've decided to buy a nice country mansion and run it as an hotel—one of those week-end hotels.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: But aren't times too bad for week-end hotels?

PARSONS: No, your ladyship. The worse times are, the more run there is on week-end hotels. As soon as gentlemen begin losing all their money—especially gentlemen in the City—they have to get away for the week-ends.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Very well, Parsons—if you acquire one of these places, I shall apply to you for a post as social manager. You'll want somebody to give the place a tone, won't you?

PARSONS: I suppose so, your ladyship. Though you don't want too much tone—at least not after about seven in the evening, when they begin coming in for their cocktails.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Quite so, but I shall have finished my duties before seven in the evening. By that

time, I shall have retired to my own suite. Possibly I may not sleep in the place?

PARSONS: I think that might be better, your ladyship.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Come now, Parsons, you're not going to offer me this post without a suite of my own, preferably on the first floor? You must do the thing well.

PARSONS (*apologetically*): Well, your ladyship, I haven't really worked all that out yet.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*very firmly*): Then the sooner you do the better. Attention to detail is *absolutely* necessary. If I'd thought you weren't going to plan everything properly beforehand, I wouldn't have considered your offer for a moment. (*Enter SAUNDERS, MRS. LANCICOURT and GURNEY.*) Ah!—here you are. Now will you see if my car is ready, Parsons? And don't forget. You know—the draw, the prize, the hotel.

PARSONS: No, your ladyship.

*Goes out.*

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: I must be going. Is Lord Kettlewell about?

MRS. LANCICOURT (*grimly*): Apparently not, at the moment. But he'll be coming down soon.

GURNEY: He's still at the telephone, I'm afraid, Lady Knightsbridge.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Well, I don't want to disturb him. Say good-bye to him for me, please, and thank him for his charming lunch. By the way, I sent Mr. Staggles round the garden to shake up his liver.

SAUNDERS: The Comrade oughtn't to have a liver. It's an act of class treachery.

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE (*shaking hands*): Good-bye. (*To MRS. LANCICOURT.*) And don't forget about my rich South Americans. A house with hundreds of bedrooms.

SAUNDERS: Let me see you to your car. (*Moves to door.*)

LADY KNIGHTSBRIDGE: Thank you. It isn't my car, but you can see me to it.

*Goes out with SAUNDERS.*

MRS. LANCICOURT: And now, please, Mr. Gurney, you can tell Richard—Lord Kettlewell—that I want to see him down here at once.

GURNEY: Yes, of course I will. But—I say, you know—I understood—well, naturally, that's why I came along——

MRS. LANCICOURT: What are you talking about?

GURNEY: Look here, I'm frightfully sorry if I've just done or said anything to offend you.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*becoming exasperated*): You haven't, but if you're not careful you will have in a minute.

GURNEY: Well, that's all right, you know, but it's hardly giving a fellow a sporting chance, is it? I mean—keep a fellow interested and up to the mark and all that, I agree—only to be expected, but just when I come dashing along, ready for a heart-to-heart——

MRS. LANCICOURT: A heart-to-heart! What *are* you talking about?

GURNEY (*fatuously*): Well—what could I be talking about? I mean to say, naturally I'm talking about *us*.

MRS. LANCICOURT: *Us*? There isn't any *us*.

GURNEY: Not yet perhaps. But give a fellow a chance. I mean, you really can't reproach me, can you? Nobody's ever accused me of not making a push for it once the flag's waved——

MRS. LANCICOURT: What flag?

GURNEY (*fatuously*): Well—you know what I mean—Hilda.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Don't call me Hilda.

GURNEY: But I——

MRS. LANCICOURT: Do you think I've been waving a flag at you?

GURNEY: Well—that's putting it crudely, isn't it? Can't exactly expect a fellow to give a plain *Yes* to that? But naturally when I gathered you wanted to see me for an urgent and confidential talk——

MRS. LANCICOURT: Who told you I wanted to see you? Was it Pamela?

GURNEY: Well—you can hardly expect me to tell you that——

MRS. LANCICOURT (*furiously*): Then it was.

STAGGLES *enters from the garden*.

STAGGLES (*leering at* MRS. LANCICOURT): Hello!

GURNEY (*to* STAGGLES): Look here, must you barge into a very private conversation like this?

STAGGLES: Yes, I must. Unless I'm told I'm not wanted.

GURNEY: Well, you're not.

STAGGLES: What!

MRS. LANCICOURT (*thoroughly exasperated*): Mr. Gurney, will you kindly go at once to Lord Kettlewell and tell him that I wish to speak to him?

GURNEY: Well, of course if you put it like that——

MRS. LANCICOURT (*coldly*): I do put it like that.

STAGGLES: Only way to put it. Push off, Gurney. Can't you see you're not wanted here? (*Leers at MRS. LANCICOURT, who takes no notice of him. GURNEY glares at STAGGLES, smiles feebly at MRS. LANCICOURT, then goes out.*) Well, here we are. I spotted it was you right across the garden there and hurried over.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*coldly*): That was quite unnecessary. (*Moves away from him.*)

STAGGLES (*following her*): You mean we're not going to stay here? 'That's all right, but if I hadn't come across you mightn't have known where I was.

MRS. LANCICOURT: There's certainly something to be said for knowing where you are, Mr. Staggles.

STAGGLES: Oh—let's drop this Mr. Staggles business. Your name's Hilda, I know. You see, I don't miss anything where you're concerned. My name's Herbert.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*icily*): It suits you. Bert for short, I suppose?

STAGGLES (*triumphantly*): Always used to be, when I was younger. Let's make it Bert then. Now what about a walk right to the other end of the garden? You could spend hours down there. Nobody about.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*who has been restless up to now, hardly paying any attention to him. Now she looks hard at him and is very firm*): Go away.

STAGGLES (*bewildered*): Go away?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Yes, go away.

STAGGLES: Where to?

MRS. LANCICOURT: Anywhere a long way off. Go to Nijni Novgorod. (*Turning away.*)

STAGGLES: What for? I've just been.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*terribly exasperated*): Then go back there. Go anywhere. Only don't stand there, making those idiotic faces at me and talking like a lunatic. You'll make me scream in a minute.

STAGGLES (*reproachfully*): I suppose this is the way you pampered bourgeois women play with a man, to lure him on. (*She makes a gesture of despair and moves about restlessly, STAGGLES following her.*) Why can't we face one another frankly, like comrades. You're a woman. I'm a man. You like me. I like you. Our minds may work differently, but just now that doesn't matter. Man isn't simply a mind. He's an animal. The animal in you appeals to the animal in me. The animal in me attracts the animal in you——

*Voices are heard off.*

MRS. LANCICOURT: Oh—go away. And take your zoo with you. (*Moving towards the door.*) Lord Kettlewell's coming. If he hears you talking like that, he'll have you thrown out of the place. Hurry up and go.

STAGGLES (*reluctantly, and slowly moving away, towards*



*the garden*): Oh—all right. But I don't see why you're treating me like this. I shan't go far. (*Goes off, grumbling, into the garden.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL *enters*.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Sorry I've been kept so long. But even though it is the week-end, we're in the middle of another crisis.

MRS. LANCICOURT: And so am I. Really, Richard, this house is like a lunatic asylum. Gurney began talking like an idiot. That wild man your daughter brought with her must be completely tight, for he's raving. And to crown all, your daughter Pamela—I suppose she *is* your daughter?

LORD KETTLEWELL: I suppose so. She looks vaguely like what I remember of her as a child. But these girls look so much alike that she could easily *not* be my daughter (*Laughs.*) Be damned queer if all the time she wasn't, wouldn't it?

MRS. LANCICOURT (*dryly*): Very. But I think we can assume that she *is* your daughter. Well, not half an hour ago, this girl—who's really as much a stranger to you as she is to me—calmly proposed that I should clear out.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Did she really? Damned cheek!

MRS. LANCICOURT: I suppose she didn't do it by any chance at your instigation?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Of course she didn't. From what I've seen of Pamela, she's not likely to do anything at anybody's instigation. Besides, my dear Hilda, would I—now I ask you?

MRS. LANCICOURT: You needn't. I might give you the answer. I suppose you didn't invite her here?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Of course I didn't invite her here. How *could* I invite her here?

MRS. LANCICOURT: You might do anything, after that letter you sent me yesterday.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I tell you, my dear Hilda, the girl dropped in here this morning clean out of the blue—or the red.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I'm not talking about her now, I'm talking about that foul letter you sent me yesterday.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, we were talking about Pamela.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Anything rather than that letter.

LORD KETTLEWELL: One subject at a time. That's the only way to get anything done. Business teaches you that.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Yes, and look where business is now.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*relieved*): Well, that's a good point. I will say that for you, Hilda. You can make a good point when you want to. Where is business now? Strictly speaking, there isn't a money market any longer. Finance—in the real meaning of the term—doesn't exist. Take America——

MRS. LANCICOURT: That'll do, Richard. I'm not going to take America. And I'm not going to be side-tracked either. You know very well what's brought me down here to-day. I simply can't understand you, Richard.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Ah—that's the trouble, Hilda. I don't think you ever have understood me——

MRS. LANCICOURT (*sharply*): Oh, don't be ridiculous. I understand you only too well. (*Step to R.C.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL: You just said you didn't understand me. Now either you understand me or you don't. Let's be logical.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Let's be shuffling, you mean.

PAMELA *enters*.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Now look here——

PAMELA: I'm sorry to interrupt, but you're wanted urgently on the telephone, father.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Oh—this is absurd, Richard. Let somebody else take the call.

PAMELA: It's from Toronto. Or Johannesburg. Terribly expensive and important.

LORD KETTLEWELL: All right. Excuse me, Hilda.

*Goes out.*

PAMELA (*thoughtfully*): I do hope father's being sensible.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I don't know what you mean by that, but he's just told me that he didn't invite you here and that you came along unexpectedly.

PAMELA: Poor father! He's not being sensible, though why he shouldn't be with an old friend like you, I can't imagine. I suppose he's shy.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I've never noticed it.

PAMELA (*slowly, thoughtfully*): It was probably rather silly of me to arrive here by myself—like this.

MRS. LANCICOURT: It was probably rather silly of you to arrive here at all, either by yourself or with anybody else.

PAMELA: I suppose I ought to have let mother get here first.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Your mother get here first!

PAMELA (*very coolly*): Yes. Mother's coming here to-day too, of course.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Your mother! It's absurd.

PAMELA: Absurd! I don't see anything absurd about it.

MRS. LANCICOURT: It's preposterous.

PAMELA: Why? Because they've been separated so long? Oh—but you never know with people, do you? Especially if they're sentimental people.

MRS. LANCICOURT: I don't believe for a moment that Lady Kettlewell is coming here to-day.

PAMELA: Oh yes—she'll turn up all right. We exchanged telegrams about it, this very morning. Here's hers. (*Handing over telegram, and while MRS. LANCICOURT is pondering over it, goes on chattering.*) I'm surprised father didn't tell you, seeing that you're such old friends. (*MRS. LANCICOURT tears up telegram.*) He must be shy. You'll like mother. She's charming. Very capable too in her own way. She doesn't seem the least bit businesslike, but she built up quite a good business of her own——

MRS. LANCICOURT (*furiously*): Oh, will you please be quiet. I want to think.

PAMELA (*very coldly*): I beg your pardon. (*Turns away.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT, *looking very angry*, rings the bell, and PARSONS appears.

MRS. LANCICOURT: Tell Briggs to bring the car round at once, Parsons. I want to catch that three-fifty-five train.

PARSONS: Very good, madame. (*Goes out.*)

MRS. LANCICOURT (*angrily*): I suppose your poor shy father will spend the rest of the afternoon telephoning to Toronto?

PAMELA: Oh, no. He's not really telephoning. I invented that call for him. (*Rising, looking out into the garden, then calling*) Comrade Staggles, Comrade Staggles. Mrs. Lancicourt's going. Come and say good-bye to her.

LORD KETTLEWELL and SAUNDERS appear at the door.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*bitterly*): You'll be delighted to learn, Richard, that I'm returning to town on the three-fifty-five.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*not very successfully disguising his relief*): Oh—I say, Hilda, that's very early, isn't it? Can't you stay for——

MRS. LANCICOURT (*impatiently*): Oh—don't be idiotic, Richard. I despise a coward. Well, I hope you have all the happiness you deserve.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*bewildered*): I don't know what you mean.

MRS. LANCICOURT (*scornfully*): Of course you do.

COMRADE STAGGLES *dashes in from garden, pushing past PAMELA, and hurries towards* MRS. LANCICOURT.

STAGGLES (*breathlessly*): Look here, Mrs. Lancicourt, you're not going, are you? If you're going to be in London, what about coming with me next Friday night to our ping-pong tournament at the Red Comrades Club?

MRS. LANCICOURT (*turning on him*): Mr. Staggles, if you ever see me in London and come up and speak to me——

STAGGLES (*hopefully*): Yes?

MRS. LANCICOURT (*vindictively*): I shall call the nearest policeman.

STAGGLES *retreats in pained amazement and goes back into the garden.*

(*She looks at LORD KETTLEWELL, who is now standing aside from the doorway*) Good-bye, Richard. I hope you have all the domestic happiness you deserve. I'm sure you will, especially with such a charming daughter. No, don't come to the car. I'd much rather you didn't.

SAUNDERS: May I?

MRS. LANCICOURT *marches out, followed by*  
SAUNDERS.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well?

PAMELA: Well?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well?

PAMELA (*making herself comfortable*): Well and good. She's gone, and now we can all be nice and friendly, and have a rest from the catty work. That woman was terribly exhausting to be with.

ACT II

THE ROUNDABOUT

LORD KETTLEWELL: No doubt. But what did you say to her? What made her go. I suppose she has gone?

SAUNDERS *re-enters*.

SAUNDERS: Yes, she's gone. With Briggs in front of the car, and Dudgeon and Umbrage sitting with her at the back.

PAMELA: Dudgeon? Oh—I see—joke.

SAUNDERS (*gravely*): Yes, joke. I must have my little joke about this time.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You must have said something to her.

PAMELA: I did. I told her that Lady Kettlewell was arriving some time to-day.

LORD KETTLEWELL: What!

PAMELA: Yes.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You told her your mother was arriving here to-day?

PAMELA: I did.

LORD KETTLEWELL: And she believed you?

PAMELA: Yes.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*roaring with laughter*): What a bluff! I don't know how you managed it. By George—Chuffy—that's rich.

SAUNDERS: Yes, and what a pleasure to see something again that *is* rich.

PAMELA: She didn't seem to want to stay and meet Lady Kettlewell.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*still laughing*): No, I dare say she

didn't. (*To PAMELA.*) But why do you keep on saying Lady Kettlewell. Call her your mother.

PAMELA: Why should I?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Because she is your mother.

PAMELA: Is she?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Of course she is. She must be, if you're my daughter.

PAMELA (*coolly*): But am I your daughter?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Of course you're my daughter. Don't be ridiculous. (*Looking at her, then with marked change of tone.*) I say, you are my daughter, aren't you?

PAMELA: Do you think I am?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Naturally. You come here and announce yourself as my daughter, and you look like her. At least you look what I remember she looked like as a child.

PAMELA: That's true. As a matter of fact, I am rather like Pamela Kettlewell. Otherwise of course I wouldn't have taken the job on.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Taken the job on! Look here, young woman, you don't mean to tell me you've come here masquerading as my daughter. Chuffy, what the devil do you make of this?

SAUNDERS: I'm not called upon to make anything of it, I haven't a daughter.

PAMELA (*smiling*): Well?

LORD KETTLEWELL: What's the good of saying *Well* like that? It's idiotic. Are you my daughter or aren't you, that's what I want to know.



PAMELA: It's painful to see a loving father showing such anxiety, Lord Kettlewell.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, this beats me. I suppose you can't be Pamela.

PAMELA: Are you disappointed?

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'm annoyed at your damned impudence.

PAMELA: But relieved?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, not relieved.

PAMELA: Disappointed?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, as a matter of fact—if you must know—I am.

PAMELA: Then you needn't be, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You are Pamela.

PAMELA: Of course I am. (*Turning to SAUNDERS.*) Chuffy wasn't taken in, were you, Chuffy?

SAUNDERS: No, because this morning you remembered that I was called Chuffy.

PAMELA: But thank you for being so appreciative, father. Only a few hours ago, you wanted to turn me out.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, but I didn't know you then.

PAMELA: And you don't know me now.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, but I'm learning, I'm learning. (*Chuckling.*) Telling Hilda your mother was coming here to-day. What a bluff! By the way, how is your mother?

PAMELA: Quite well, thank you, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Why has she sold her business?

PAMELA: She got a good offer for it from Harridges. And I think she'd like to get married again.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Married again! She'd have to be divorced first.

PAMELA: Yes, but that wouldn't be difficult, would it?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*dubiously*): No, I suppose not.

PAMELA: There's somebody who wants to marry her very badly. And I think she wants to marry him.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Who is this fellow?

PAMELA: He's very attractive. A retired naval officer. Very straight and trim and brown. And he's got bright blue eyes.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—confound his bright blue eyes—I'm not interested in 'em. But you don't mean to tell me your mother seriously cares about a fellow of that type?

PAMELA: Yes, why not?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*indignantly*): Why not? Because if she does, she's not the intelligent woman she used to be. Why, a fellow like that—retired naval man—you know the sort, Chuffy—would bore her stiff in a week, and I don't care how bright and blue his eyes are.

SAUNDERS: It's a type, Richard, that has a peculiar fascination for the female of all ages. Simple masculine natures, you know. Devoted. Chivalrous. Dense. No, I'm not surprised.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, I am. If there's one kind of man more calculated to bore and infuriate an

## ACT II

## THE ROUNDABOUT

intelligent woman than any other, it's one of these retired quarter-deck louts. They've no interests beyond boats and bridge and shooting——

SAUNDERS: Rough shooting too——

LORD KETTLEWELL: No conversation at all. They don't think.

SAUNDERS: That's why their eyes are so bright and blue.

LORD KETTLEWELL: They haven't an idea in their heads. Just overgrown schoolboys, that's all. I'd never have believed that Rose—however, it's no good talking about it.

PAMELA: I believe you're both jealous.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Certainly not. Never been jealous in my life. (*Staring at PAMELA, who is smiling slightly.*) Look here, what are you grinning at? This isn't another of your tricks, is it?

PAMELA (*with great dignity*): Tricks? I don't understand you, father.

SAUNDERS: Don't insult a poor defenceless girl, Richard.

LORD KETTLEWELL: It seems to me you're full of tricks. You bluffed Mrs. Lancicourt into believing your mother was coming here to-day. You nearly bluffed me into believing you weren't my daughter at all. And now you're giving us all this stuff.

PAMELA: I'm afraid you're talking wildly, father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, no tricks, please.

PAMELA: And no absurd accusations, please.

PARSONS *enters*.

PARSONS (*very impressively*): Lady Kettlewell. (*Holding the doors open for her.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*jumping up with a shout*): What!

LADY KETTLEWELL *enters, a pleasant-featured, smart woman in her forties.*

PAMELA (*rising—with a marked change of tone from all her recent speeches.*) Oh, mother, you are the limit. I told you to come *after* tea.

QUICK CURTAIN

END OF ACT TWO

### ACT III

*The SCENE is the same. The French windows opening on to the lawn are wide open and show a glimpse of moonlight. It is after dinner and the lights are on. COMRADE STAGGLES and SAUNDERS are discovered at their ease, smoking large cigars and drinking liqueur brandy. SAUNDERS is wearing a dinner-jacket, but COMRADE STAGGLES is dressed as before. The latter is a little tight, quite clear in his speech, but very communicative and confidential.*

STAGGLES (*finishing his brandy*): Ah!

SAUNDERS: Have some more? (*Pouring some out for him.*)

STAGGLES (*luxuriously*): So these are the spoils of capitalist brigandage?

SAUNDERS: Yes. What do you think of them?

STAGGLES (*solemnly*): I like them.

SAUNDERS: You have a taste for these things?

STAGGLES: I have. And that's ironical.

SAUNDERS (*helping himself*): Very ironical. I congratulate you on your natural fine palate. But you see what will happen when you and your revolutionaries have their way? There won't be any more of these superb, these exquisite, these inexcusable luxuries—cigars that cost as much as a workman is paid for half a day—bottles of brandy that cost far more than a workman is paid in a week.

STAGGLES: I look forward to the time when everybody who wants them will be able to enjoy these things.

SAUNDERS: Then, my dear Comrade Staggles, you're deluding yourself. Either a few people must have them or nobody can have them and they'll disappear from the world.

STAGGLES: I'd rather nobody had them than just a few people.

SAUNDERS: That means you don't appreciate them as much as I do.

STAGGLES: Why?

SAUNDERS: Even if I couldn't enjoy a really beautiful Havana or a genuine old brandy myself, I'd be glad to know that somebody was enjoying them somewhere. I'd hate to think they'd vanished altogether, gone for ever. A solemn thought, that, Comrade. The hour may soon be striking. Our revels now are ended. And you know what you people will do?

STAGGLES: What?

SAUNDERS: You'll fill the world with nothing but artisans in uniform, drinking malted milk in numbered sheds.

STAGGLES: Well, at least they'll all have the same chance.

SAUNDERS: The same chance of what? Uniforms and malted milk? They'll all have the same chance of being dull, and they'll all have to take it. What you're suffering from, Comrade Staggles, is envy.

STAGGLES: If I am, I am. But it's not just envy for myself, but for a few hundred million other poor devils.

And if I'm not careful, I'm going to be tight. Where is everybody, anyhow.

SAUNDERS: Lord and Lady Kettlewell, I think, are having a solemn talk somewhere in the garden.

STAGGLES: Making it up, I suppose?

SAUNDERS: Probably.

STAGGLES: Sentimental bourgeois. Not that I blame him, if he fancies her. A man must have a woman. That's the devil of it. Specially in this sort of life.

SAUNDERS: What do you mean by this sort of life?

STAGGLES: Well, this rich artificial sort of life, where you're eating and drinking all day, and all the women are parading their sexual charms. You haven't a chance to forget them. Where's Pamela?

SAUNDERS: I think she went out there with young Gurney. (*Indicating the garden.*)

STAGGLES: That chap's a drivelling nincompoop. And it'll be just like Pamela now—with all her damned whims and fancies and fads and palavers—to go and fall in love—as they call it—with him. I believe he expects all the women to fall in love with him. Probably they do too. They're silly enough.

SAUNDERS: You seem a little bitter on this subject, Comrade Staggles. Have you been unlucky in your experiences. Pamela now? Surely you admire her?

STAGGLES (*gloomily*): Yes, in a way. But she's not really my idea of a girl. Too unstable. What I'd like is a girl who'd look like that but who'd be as easy and dependable as a cow.

SAUNDERS: Then you'll be disappointed.

STAGGLES: I always have been.

SAUNDERS: When they look like Pamela, they act like Pamela.

STAGGLES: I'm glad you said *act*. After going to that academy of dramatic art, Pamela decided not to go on the stage. But if you ask me, she's on the stage all the time. It's all acting with her.

SAUNDERS: I've caught glimpses of it, I admit.

STAGGLES: Even her communism's shaky. I don't consider she's heart and soul in the movement, and neither do some of the other comrades—especially the other women.

SAUNDERS: No, I can well believe the other women have their doubts. What sort of women are they? Plain?

STAGGLES (*with deep gloom*): Mostly. Usually with flat faces. I don't know why the revolutionary cause, which is the only thing that can save the human race from disaster, should attract mostly flat-faced women. But it does—worse luck!

SAUNDERS: Well, I could tell you why, but I don't think I'll bother. You're gloomy enough as it is.

PAMELA and GURNEY are seen talking together outside the French window.

(*Rising.*) Hello, we were just talking about you. Enjoying yourselves?

PAMELA (*coming in—very coolly*): We've had quite an amusing time, thank you. Mr. Gurney, after hinting to me how successful he is with my sex and how lucky I am to attract his attention, has been taking me into the



darkest corners of the garden in the hope that I would let him kiss me.

GURNEY (*indignantly*): Oh—I say—that's absolutely untrue. How can you say that? When did I—oh, that's awful rot.

STAGGLES (*with gloomy satisfaction*): I'll bet it isn't.

GURNEY: Yes, you would.

STAGGLES (*pugnaciously*): What do you mean by that?

GURNEY: I mean that nobody's talking to you. Please keep out of it.

STAGGLES: Don't be a fool. Do you think I only speak when I'm spoken to? Who do you think I am? Queen Victoria when a little girl?

SAUNDERS (*delighted*): Yes, I've been noticing the resemblance all day.

GURNEY (*to PAMELA*): But I say—really—how can you say that? Why, I spent most of the time listening to you talking about communism.

PAMELA: Yes, but when you weren't listening—and you weren't listening much—you were doing exactly what I've said you were doing.

SAUNDERS: What's the matter with him?

PAMELA: Probably he's become the slave of your technique. Only it's rather insulting to a girl's intelligence to be the victim of a mechanical technique. It's as bad as being one of those brown cows in a field that bad artists keep on painting over and over again.

STAGGLES (*mocking GURNEY*): Ha! Ha!

GURNEY: Lout.

STAGGLES: What did you say?

GURNEY: I said *Lout*.

PAMELA: Yes, you know, Comrade Staggles, you are rather a lout. (*To SAUNDERS.*) Did you say you were talking about me? What were you saying?

SAUNDERS (*maliciously*): Ask our comrade here.

STAGGLES: Oh, I'm not afraid of telling her.

GURNEY: I'll bet you are.

STAGGLES: Oh, am I? I only said that your communism was shaky and that you were always acting.

PAMELA (*indignantly*): You said that. Of all the cheek! I'm a better communist than you are, Comrade Staggles. As for acting, I'm sincerity itself compared with you. Why, you never stop posing.

STAGGLES: Posing! Mel

PAMELA: Yes, posing—you. You can't stop posing. Only your usual pose is so unpleasant that people can't believe it is a pose. They think anything as bad as that simply can't be helped and must be natural.

GURNEY (*mocking* STAGGLES): Hal Hal

STAGGLES: Bourgeois half-wit.

GURNEY (*menacingly*): Say that again.

STAGGLES: Certainly. Bourgeois half-wit.

GURNEY: You've said quite enough of that sort of thing to-day already. Drop it now, or you'll be sorry.

STAGGLES (*jeering*): Sorry! Why should I be sorry?

GURNEY: Because I might lose my temper.

STAGGLES: Portrait of an English gentleman exercising self-restraint.

ACT III

THE ROUNDABOUT

GURNEY: One needs it with a cad like you.

STAGGLES: Not quite cricket quarrelling in front of a lady, eh? It just isn't done, eh?

PAMELA: Well, it isn't going to be done in front of this lady. I'm tired of the pair of you. If you want to quarrel—and I don't see why you shouldn't, you've nothing else to do—go outside and quarrel properly. Then you can have a fight if you like. Don't be afraid. (*Turning away.*)

STAGGLES: Who's afraid?

GURNEY: Well, I'm not.

STAGGLES (*to GURNEY*): Do you think I am—or something?

GURNEY: Yes. You're only a windbag.

STAGGLES: Oh—am I?

PAMELA: Oh, go on—the pair of you. Outside, outside.

GURNEY: Oh, I'm ready to go. I think I shan't hear myself called so many names there. (*Moves towards garden.*)

STAGGLES (*following him*): Oh yes, you will.

GURNEY: No, I shan't.

STAGGLES: Oh yes—you will. Parasitel

GURNEY (*turning at window*): Cad!

*They go out into garden.*

PAMELA: Well, we must be thankful for that.

SAUNDERS: You deliberately egged on those two very silly young men, and they'll probably go on calling one another names until at last they come to blows on the tennis court.

PAMELA: And a very good thing too. They both need something—outside making love—to let steam off. They've been tiresome all day, and if they do knock one another about they'll feel better for it.

SAUNDERS: But you brought the Comrade here yourself.

PAMELA: Yes, but he's been at his silliest ever since he came, or at least ever since he drank all those things at lunch.

SAUNDERS: I don't agree. I think drink improves him. Are your father and mother still out there?

PAMELA: Yes, they're walking round and round, hard at it talking. They seemed to be finding it all very absorbing.

SAUNDERS: Perhaps by this time they're feeling sentimental.

PAMELA (*disgusted*): Ugh!

SAUNDERS: Why, my dear Pamela? Do you think parents haven't a right to feel sentimental?

PAMELA: Nobody ought to be sentimental.

SAUNDERS: Strictly speaking, nobody *is* sentimental. It's only a label we stick on other people when they seem to be enjoying their emotions.

PAMELA: And it serves them right. I loathe sentimentality.

SAUNDERS: Well, I don't know why you should. It's one of the cheapest luxuries there is, and the proletariat has always had its share of it.

PAMELA: It's so dishonest.

SAUNDERS: I don't see that honesty or dishonesty comes into it. You might as well say that chocolate cake is dishonest. Or hot water-bottles. Are you a very hard young woman?

PAMELA: Not particularly. I'm merely honest.

SAUNDERS: I'd find it easier to believe that if your point of view wasn't so fashionable. Besides, you're illogical. You bring your parents together after this long separation——

PAMELA: Bring my parents together? Chuffy, how can you talk such disgusting rubbish. I believe you're one of the old silent film fans. You used to cry in the dark over Mary Pickford. I understand now why you approved of me so quickly. I thought there was a catch in it. You see me as the little angel girl, the sunshine child, who at last brings peace and love to her parents, joining two severed lives, healing two lonely hearts.

SAUNDERS: I think you're a little monkey.

PAMELA: Even a little monkey wouldn't be so indecent as to try and bring its parents together. Why should I try and patch their marriage up for them?

SAUNDERS: Well, you might—you know.

PAMELA: Why? It's their business, not mine.

SAUNDERS: That's one of the reasons.

PAMELA: Why?

SAUNDERS: You're not going to tell me that an active and intelligent girl like yourself is prepared to spend her time minding her own business. Why go to Russia? That's their business, not yours.

PAMELA: That's different.

SAUNDERS: And why bring your mother here?

PAMELA: I didn't bring her. I told her I was coming here and I said she might as well come along too.

SAUNDERS: And that isn't bringing her?

PAMELA: No, of course not. I knew she wanted to see father about various things, and I knew that if I was here, she would pluck up the courage to come. At this very minute, she's probably talking to him about my *future*—as she always calls it. When she says that, she makes me feel like something that's being written up in a Times Trade Supplement. You know—the Future of British Engineering. Mother has a special voice when she refers to my future. She's probably talking in that voice now. And all the time I know a lot more about my future than they do about theirs.

SAUNDERS: None of us knows anything about our futures now. Even the astrologers are only about a week ahead. So don't you be too certain about your future. To begin with, you've got such a lot of it to fill in—with any luck.

PAMELA: I propose to work—in single devotion—for the great cause. I've settled that.

SAUNDERS: Quite. I know. You really settled the rest of your life the other day. You began a new and altogether superior way of living—after making various false starts—a week last Tuesday.

PAMELA (*laughing at herself*): Chuffy, at times you're really rather devilish.

SAUNDERS: But seriously, you know, you mustn't be surprised if those two out there are making it up.

PAMELA: It's possible. I had a suspicion that father, meeting mother again so unexpectedly and having a nice night for it, might suddenly turn sentimental and old-times-y. And if he's just the big lonely boy—you know—there's no telling what mother might not agree to. And, like a fool, I probably made it worse by making him rather jealous.

SAUNDERS: You mean—the retired naval man with bright blue eyes——?

PAMELA: Yes.

SAUNDERS: Why did you?

PAMELA: Just devilment I'm afraid. I was feeling rather gay at the time, having got rid of that woman, and he looked so pleased with himself that I had to do something.

*Voices are heard outside.*

SAUNDERS (*glancing out*): They're coming in, I think.

PAMELA: Oh, very well. If that's what you want. (*With absurd change of tone.*) Have you been to the opera this season, Mr. Saunders?

LORD and LADY KETTLEWELL *enter from garden.*  
*They are both in evening dress.*

LADY KETTLEWELL (*pleased with life*): What a lovely evening! It's so fresh down here too.

PAMELA (*significantly*): Ah!

SAUNDERS (*hastily*): Yes, it's delightful, isn't it? I think I'll finish this cigar in the garden, if you'll excuse me.

PAMELA: No, we won't excuse you.

SAUNDERS: I think there's a majority in favour of excusing me. (*Goes into garden.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*who is clearly in a sentimental mood*): Good old Chuffy! (*To PAMELA.*) You like him, don't you, Pamela? I know he likes you.

PAMELA (*primly*): I don't approve of him, but I like him.

LADY KETTLEWELL: What do you mean, darling—you don't approve of him? Churton Saunders is one of the nicest men in London.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—that's just her communist nonsense. She means she doesn't approve of him as a social or economic type.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Oh, that! I thought it was something serious.

PAMELA: So it is.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*soothingly*): Yes, darling. I know it is—for you just now.

PAMELA (*not too unpleasantly*): Mother—you're impossible.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*heavily*): Allow me to point out, Pamela, that's hardly the way to talk to your mother.

PAMELA (*agbast*): Well, I must say——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Now look here——

LADY KETTLEWELL: No, Richard, that's quite all right.

LORD KETTLEWELL: My dear Rose, I must be allowed——

LADY KETTLEWELL: No, no. Not now.

PAMELA (*looking quizzically from one to the other*): The Kettlewell Family at home.



LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, and not a bad thing either.

PAMELA (*significantly*): Oh!

LADY KETTLEWELL: Pamela darling, there are several things your father and I want to talk to you about.

PAMELA (*after a pause*): Yes?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now, don't be tiresome, darling.

PAMELA: I'm not being tiresome, mother.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*bursting out*): Yes, you are.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now, Richard——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Sorry, Rose.

PAMELA (*sweetly*): I hope I'm not embarrassing you in any way.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, of course you're not.

PAMELA: That's all right then.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, it isn't all right.

PAMELA: Why not? Talk away.

LORD KETTLEWELL: How can a fellow talk——  
(*Rising, looking at PAMELA.*) Oh, damn! (*Goes out quickly.*)

LADY KETTLEWELL: Poor Richard! He never was good at this sort of thing.

PAMELA: Well, after all, he hasn't done much of it yet, has he?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now, listen, darling—and stop being tiresome. Your father and I have just had a very serious talk——

PAMELA: I knew it.

LADY KETTLEWELL: And I'm very glad we did. He's

dreadfully worried about business, and he's just lost an enormous sum of money, thousands and thousands of pounds——

PAMELA: And so you've made it up.

LADY KETTLEWELL: That remains to be seen. But your father asked me to forgive him—and I must say he did it very nicely—and I admitted there might have been faults on both sides——

PAMELA (*reproachfully*): Mother, you didn't.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Of course I did. You wouldn't have me be dishonest at such a time, would you?

PAMELA: Dishonest? But you've always told me that there weren't faults on both sides, that it was all father's fault.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Yes, darling, but he hadn't asked me to forgive him then.

PAMELA: Ah!

LADY KETTLEWELL: Besides, you can't expect a mother to discuss her faults as a wife with her own daughter. It's too preposterous. Wait until you have a large daughter.

PAMELA: I shall never have a daughter—large or small.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Oh—you can't say that.

PAMELA: I can. I don't propose to lead that sort of life.

LADY KETTLEWELL: I don't quite know what you mean by *that sort of life*.

PAMELA: I mean that I don't want love and marriage and motherhood and all the rest of it.

LADY KETTLEWELL: So you say. But we'll see. It always seemed to me that Alec Grenside——

PAMELA (*hastily*): Mother, you're not to talk about Alec Grenside. I don't want to hear his name again. He's nothing to me, nothing at all.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Well, dear, if he's nothing to you you ought not to mind hearing his name. I'm sure most of the people whose names I hear are nothing to me.

PAMELA: Well, please don't bring Alec into it.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Very well, I won't.

PAMELA: Where is he?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Who? Alec?

PAMELA: Yes, of course.

LADY KETTLEWELL: I don't see why you should say *of course*, seeing that we're not talking about him. I don't know where he is.

PAMELA: Well, never mind. We're talking about you—not about me.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Very well. Though of course you have to come into it. (*Pausing.*) Well then—your father is very worried and doesn't know what's going to happen in his business—and he and I have discovered that we're still very fond of one another, and I've forgiven him and admitted there were faults on both sides, and of course we're not so young as we were—though of course, we really *are* quite young—and I must say I was surprised how very little your father's aged at all, both in manner and appearance——

PAMELA: And the long and the short of it is—you've decided to start all over again.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Almost decided.

PAMELA: It's the same thing. Did he ask you about that retired naval officer with the bright blue eyes?

LADY KETTLEWELL: He did. And I want to know, Pamela, how you dared invent such an outrageous falsehood to tell your own father about your own mother? Retired naval officer! Really, Pamela, I was furious when I understood what you'd been telling him. I never heard of such a thing.

PAMELA: Did you find it difficult to persuade him that Bright Blue Eyes had never existed?

LADY KETTLEWELL (*rather confused*): Well, as a matter of fact, we didn't really go into it properly.

PAMELA (*accusingly*): Mother.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now, darling——

PAMELA: Mother, you terribly unscrupulous female—you deliberately dodged it. You let him think there *was* a Bright Blue Eyes, didn't you? Yes, you did. And then you pretend to be angry with me! You *are* the limit, you know.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*with dignity*): Really, Pamela, I can't have you talking to me like that. Your father's quite right. You don't know how to talk to me properly.

PAMELA: So father's quite right already, is he?

LADY KETTLEWELL (*stiffly*): He's certainly quite right about some things. And I've thought for some time that, as far as you are concerned, his influence might be all to the good. There's your future to be considered.

PAMELA: Ah—my future.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Well, my dear—even if all the dreadful things you talk about are really going to happen—even if we all have to work in factories and live on rations—you'll still have a future, won't you? Nothing alters that. And nothing takes away our responsibilities as parents.

PAMELA: You wouldn't have any responsibilities as parents.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now you're talking like a child, darling. You can't take away our responsibilities as parents by Acts of Parliament. We feel them, whatever happens, as you yourself will find out one day.

PAMELA: Oh, that one day! You know, it's really a most indecent way of talking.

LORD KETTLEWELL *re-enters*.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Now you're being stupid.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Is she? What about? Have you told her?

LADY KETTLEWELL: I've been trying to.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Good. I hope you're pleased, Pamela. You ought to be, seeing that it's largely your doing.

PAMELA: It's not my doing. And I'm not pleased.

LORD KETTLEWELL: What!

PAMELA: If you think I came here to unite the family, you're wrong. And what's more, I don't approve of the family being united.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*reproachfully*): Pamela!

LORD KETTLEWELL: Well, I'm damned! Sorry, Rose—but really this child talks the most maddening nonsense.

LADY KETTLEWELL: You mustn't take her too seriously, Richard.

LORD KETTLEWELL: All right, Rose. You leave her to me. You'll find Chuffy Saunders somewhere out there. (*Watching her go out, then returning.*) Now, Pamela, I want some sort of explanation from you. What's all this tremendous disapproval of yours? You know, I believe you've hurt your mother's feelings.

PAMELA: If I have, I'm sorry.

LORD KETTLEWELL: I should think so indeed. I was beginning to think you hadn't any natural feelings.

PAMELA: That might be all hereditary, you know, father. Think how you must have upset mother in your time. And there may have been a time when I suffered just because I hadn't any real family life. If I don't believe in families any more, it may be because you robbed me of any real family background.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*sardonically*): It may. And then again it may not. My experience is that the people who argue most bitterly against family life are the very people who grew up in what used to be called one big happy family.

PAMELA: Possibly.

LORD KETTLEWELL: But I can't understand you. You come here—you get your mother here too—you do everything possible to pave the way for us, so that I've been feeling grateful to you for the last few hours, then you suddenly turn round and denounce the whole thing. Ridiculous! Simply childish perversity. You want to feel important, that's all.

PAMELA: Well, even if it should be that—and it isn't—you couldn't really blame me, could you? After all, father, I haven't been very important to you for a long time, have I? You told me only this morning I was nothing but a strange young woman who talked communist jargon at you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—that was different.

PAMELA: You're responsible for a lot already. You don't like my revolutionary ideas——

LORD KETTLEWELL (*jeering*): Your revolutionary ideas! You talk as if you were Karl Marx himself. Where's your sense of humour?

PAMELA: It's not working at the moment. That's why I'm saying something really worth saying. That's why hardly anybody ever does say anything worth saying in England. Too much sense of humour. See *Punch* every Wednesday.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*wearily*): Get back to the revolutionary ideas, my girl. I see there's no side-tracking you. You've a little lecture ready on any topic.

PAMELA: Thank you, father. (*Lecturing him.*) Well, as I was saying, you don't like my revolutionary ideas, but I don't suppose it ever occurs to you that you may be responsible for them.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*with irony*): Do you know I don't believe it ever does occur to me that I'm responsible for them.

PAMELA: Well, you probably are. People who have had a very solid relationship with their fathers tend to be

conservative and to uphold tradition. It's a well-known fact— isn't it?—that a great many revolutionaries have been illegitimate. And probably most of the others have simply reacted against tyrannical fathers. Now I used to think of you as a tyrant——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Rubbish! There never was a man who was less of a domestic tyrant. Ask your mother. Ask, anybody. My trouble is that I'm too easy-going.

PAMELA: And then afterwards, you see, when you and mother had separated, I was almost as badly off as if I'd been illegitimate. And that is probably why I took to every revolutionary idea I could find. So you're responsible father.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Very neat, very ingenious. It has only one fault. It isn't true, and you must know it.

PAMELA: Why?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Because if all your opinions simply depend on whether your mother and I happened to hit it off, what are those opinions worth? What you're telling me now is that your being a communist or a conservative depended entirely on whether your mother spent too much on her hats ten years ago.

PAMELA: You're quite metaphysical, aren't you, father?

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, I'm not. But I'm a devil of a sight more metaphysical than you are or ever will be, unless there's something queer happening to your sex. However, let me say what I want to say. Your mother's naturally worried about your future.



PAMELA: I know.

LORD KETTLEWELL: And naturally she wants you with us. I want you here too. She wasn't sure if you would want to stay, but I told her you would.

PAMELA (*with an air of repeating something—rising*): Then, father, you'd better tell her something else—to say that I won't stay with you.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Do you mean—you don't want to stay?

PAMELA: That's it—exactly.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh—I see.

PAMELA: Shocked?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Perhaps I am—a bit.

PAMELA: I'm not sentimental—not the kind of girl who allows her menfolk to twist her round their little fingers—and I don't pretend to be. You're my father, true—but the fact remains that actually to me you're nothing but a strange middle-aged capitalist. And if I stay here, I shall be a nuisance.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Then I think you'd better be a nuisance.

PAMELA: You realise I'm telling you as plainly as I can—I don't want to stay here.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Will you stay now—as a favour to me—and then leave later if you still wish to?

PAMELA (*going towards garden*): Yes, perhaps. If you'll tell me truthfully why you want me to stay.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Because your mother wants you with her, because I'd like a daughter as well as a wife,

and because you amuse me, you young devil. (*Approaching her.*)

PAMELA: I think the third reason's probably the best, but I doubt if it's good enough. (*Calling.*) Mother. You can come in now. The conference is over.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*growling*): No, it isn't.

PAMELA: Yes, it is.

LADY KETTLEWELL *re-enters*.

LADY KETTLEWELL: All right?

LORD KETTLEWELL: I'll be hanged if I know.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Was she being difficult?

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, when she wasn't being insufferable.

PAMELA (*still at window, speaking off*): What are you two gesticulating there for? You can come in. This isn't a private meeting.

*Comes in, followed by SAUNDERS and GURNEY—the latter is rather dishevelled.*

LORD KETTLEWELL: Hello, Gurney, what's the matter with you?

GURNEY: With me, sir? (*Realising he is untidy.*) Oh, I say, sir, I'm frightfully sorry to come barging in like this. Lady Kettlewell, I beg your pardon.

LORD KETTLEWELL: That's all right. But what have you been doing?

GURNEY (*hesitating*): Well, you see——

PAMELA (*triumphantly*): I know. Comrade Staggles.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Good lord, I'd forgotten about him. Where is he? What have you been doing to him?

PAMELA: They've been fighting.

SAUNDERS (*to PAMELA*): Monkey!

GURNEY: No, we've not been fighting. But we began arguing in the garden there, and Staggles was even more foully libellous than usual. Sorry, sir, to speak about a guest here in this way, but that chap really has a foul tongue. Well, I'd had quite enough of him before, and this was really too much. I jolly well lost my temper, sir.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Did you knock him out?

GURNEY: Oh no, not at all. Nothing like that, sir.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Pity. What did you do then?

GURNEY: Well, it was all rather a foul and futile scrimmage, sir. He began pushing me, so I pushed him, and he pushed and I pushed, and then somehow or other he fell into the lily pond—went straight in, sir, like a homing carp.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*with a mock sternness*): In other words, you threw one of my guests, and my daughter's friend, into the lily pond?

GURNEY: I'm frightfully sorry, sir. But you can hardly describe it like that. It was practically an accident.

SAUNDERS: I like the word *practically* there, Gurney. I congratulate you on it.

PAMELA (*laughing*): Did he go in with a big splash?

LADY KETTLEWELL (*reproachfully*): Pamela!

SAUNDERS: Yes, this ardent reformer (*pointing to PAMELA*), who egged these two wretched young men on.

GURNEY: Oh, no, sir. That's not true——

*Voices are heard outside service door.*

SAUNDERS: My dear innocent——

*There is a noise of several people talking at once and very loudly.*

LORD KETTLEWELL (*after listening to the row*): See what they're doing out there, Gurney.

GURNEY *goes to service door. He opens door.* PARSONS, ALICE, and COMRADE STAGGLES *are all talking at once.* ALICE *is saying*: "I want to speak to the Master about it." PARSONS *is saying*: "I tell you, Alice, you can't go in. Now then, sir, you leave her alone." COMRADE STAGGLES *is saying*: "Look here, I'm not insulting you. Don't be a fool. And you keep out of it, flunkey."  
(*Bellowing.*) What are you doing, Parsons? What the blazes do you mean by making that row?

*The voices stop at once.* PARSONS *comes in. He has a mellow look.*

PARSONS (*with the gravity of a man who is quietly and happily drunk*): Beg pardon, your lordship, but these goings on are no fault of mine. We're living, your lordship, in a shtate of gre-eat social confusion.

LORD KETTLEWELL: In what?

PARSONS: Gre-eat social confusion.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Parsons, you're tight.

PARSONS (*reproachfully*): No, your lordship, mosht shertainly not tight.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You're full to the neck.

PARSONS: Yes, your lordship, but full—of feelings. I've good news, your lordship, very good news.

LORD KETTLEWELL: And you're going to have bad

news, if you're not careful. I've a good mind to discharge you, Parsons.

PARSONS (*shaking his head and smiling*): Can't discharge me, your lordship. I've already discharged myself. I'm retiring, your lordship.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You're retiring to put your head under the cold tap. Don't be a fool, Parsons.

PARSONS: I'm retiring your lordship, because I've come into a fortune.

LORD KETTLEWELL: What!

PARSONS: I've just drawn a horse in the Guernsey Sweep. A good one, too. Brassbound.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*staggered*): Brassbound in the Guernsey Sweep!

PARSONS: Brassbound in the Guernsey Sweep. Should be worth twenty thousand pounds, your lordship, if it's worth a penny.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No wonder you were getting tight. Congratulations. (*Shaking hands.*)

SAUNDERS (*also shaking hands*): Allow me, Parsons.

PARSONS: It's a pleasure, sir.

SAUNDERS: And don't forget, Parsons that I was one who liked you for yourself alone, in the old days when we were poor men together.

LORD KETTLEWELL: And now what are you going to do, Parsons?

PARSONS (*solemnly, almost as if reciting*): Well, your lordship, I propose to retire from your service, but not entirely into private life——

SAUNDERS: Parsons, this is a little speech you've prepared for the Press. You can't deny it?

PARSONS: No, sir. I thought I'd go into the hotel business. I might buy a country house——

LORD KETTLEWELL: Buy this. I can't afford to keep it any longer.

PARSONS: I'll be pleased to make you an offer for this house, your lordship. I'd like to turn it into a week-end hotel.

LORD KETTLEWELL: That won't take much doing. It's been a week-end hotel all the time I've had it. So that's why you were making all the row out there——celebrating the great event?

PARSONS (*shocked*): Certainly not, your lordship. I wouldn't so presume. It was Alice—the parlourmaid—and Mr. Staggles.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Alice, Mr. Staggles. Now what the—— Where are they? Fetch them in.

PARSONS *walks a few steps in a drunken manner, then pulls himself up and stands by door and says:*  
"Alice." ALICE *enters*.

ALICE (*breathless and flustered*): Please, your lordship, it's not my fault, at all, but Mr. Parsons wouldn't let me come and speak to your lordship, and he wouldn't tell the gentleman to stop properly and he wasn't doing anything—I mean Mr. Parsons, your lordship—and so I wanted to speak to you myself, because I'm a decent girl, your lordship, and not used to being spoken to like that by gentlemen staying in the house (*almost in tears*.)

LORD KETTLEWELL (*shouting*): But what's it all about? What gentleman? What's he been doing?

*Enter STAGGLES, who is wearing a dirty old mackintosh and apparently very little else, for you can see his socks and bare legs above. His hair is still wet, and he looks as if he has recently emerged from a pond. When he enters, PARSONS quietly goes out and closes door behind him. GURNEY returns with STAGGLES.*

STAGGLES (*gloomily*): She means me. I keep telling her I'm not a gentleman, but she won't listen.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh, it's you. What's been happening?

ALICE (*confused and tearful*): He's been talking to me in a way he oughtn't, and him a gentleman staying in the house.

PAMELA (*reproachfully*): Oh—Comrade Staggles!

LORD KETTLEWELL: Do you mean he's been trying to make love to you?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Richard, you can't talk to her like that.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*irritably*): How am I to talk to her then? Either she means that or she doesn't.

STAGGLES (*with gloomy satisfaction*): She does.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Oh she does, does she? Well, what the devil do you mean by it, Staggles? You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

STAGGLES: Why?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*irritably*): Why? Why? Oh don't be an idiot, man. Making improper advances——

STAGGLES (*jeering*): Improper advances!

LORD KETTLEWELL: Look how you've upset the girl.

ALICE: Well, I'm sorry to give all this trouble, your lordship, I am really, but he oughtn't to say such things to a decent girl in service, not when he's a gentleman staying in the house——

STAGGLES: I've told you before—I'm not a gentleman. And what does it matter whether I'm staying in the house or not?

LORD KETTLEWELL: It matters a good deal. All right—what's your name?—Alice—stop crying! There's no harm done. We all know you're very respectable and all that, and wouldn't encourage this sort of thing, at least not from gentlemen staying in the house.

ALICE: That's what I told him, your lordship. Not that he did much he oughtn't to have done——

LORD KETTLEWELL: All right. We won't go into that. (*To STAGGLES.*) I don't know what your usual habits are, but you've got to behave yourself with housemaids here.

LADY KETTLEWELL: I should think so, indeed.

STAGGLES: She isn't a housemaid to me. She's a girl, like any other girl, except she's better looking than most. As I told her. Because she happens to be wearing a uniform and does some work and has wages, that doesn't rule her out, does it? It doesn't with me. To me, she's as good as the rest of you, if not better.

ALICE (*tossing her head*): Well, who said I wasn't?

STAGGLES (*exasperated*): You're saying you aren't. And they're saying you aren't. Can't you see?

ALICE: I know my place, and nobody can say I don't.

STAGGLES (*almost shrieking*): Know your place! I tell



you, you haven't got a place. You're not a housemaid, you're a girl. And I'm not a gentleman staying in the house, I'm a young man. And if I like the look of you, I've a right to tell you so without all this silly palaver.

LORD KETTLEWELL: No, you haven't.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Of course you haven't. It's not fair to the girl, to begin with. And then there are certain obligations——

STAGGLES: Not with me there aren't. I don't accept your rotten decaying caste system, and I don't pretend to. You'd think I'd assaulted the girl or something, the way you're all going on.

ALICE: You tried to kiss me.

STAGGLES: Well, what if I did? I soon stopped trying, didn't I, when I saw you'd the mind and outlook of a parasitic wage-slave and began drivelling about gentlemen staying in the house. You make me sick, the lot of you. Look at Miss Pamela, the famous communist, just back from Russia. She's just as disgusted as the rest of you. I've touched one of the untouchables.

PAMELA (*hotly*): That's not fair, Comrade Staggles——

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): Wait a minute, before we have this split in the communist ranks. (*To ALICE.*) You get along now. There's no harm done, as far as I can see.

ALICE: Well, your lordship, I'm sure I didn't want to make trouble——

LORD KETTLEWELL: All right, that'll do.

*She goes.*

And now we can have the manifesto from the Left. It's

high time the Comrade here had his share of lecturing. I've had mine.

PAMELA: Well, I say you're damned unfair, Comrade Staggles, and I might as well tell you that you've gone down in my estimation—as an intelligent communist—with a bang! You had no right to try and make love to that girl, not because she's a housemaid or because of any caste system, but simply because she's working here and is in a difficult position. If you met her outside on her night out——

STAGGLES (*gloomily*): When is her night out? No, I thought not. None of you knows.

PAMELA: If you met her then and tried to make love to her, that would be different. But here she's working and isn't really a free person, and that's the whole point.

LADY KETTLEWELL: And very well put too, darling.

PAMELA: I think it's time you apologised for the way you've behaved to-day, Comrade Staggles. After all, I brought you here.

STAGGLES: Oh—rats! Still, I will if you want me to. (*To LORD and LADY KETTLEWELL.*) Sorry. I don't altogether know what for, but—sorry.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*bluffly*): All right, man. All right.

STAGGLES (*to PAMELA*): But I'm not apologising to you. I knew what was going to happen when you came down to lunch looking so grand. I've only one word for you, and if they want to know what it is at Headquarters, I shall tell them. (*Gathering mackintosh round him with great dignity, then pointing accusing finger.*) Rene-gade!

PAMELA (*very indignantly*): What!

STAGGLES (*very grand*): Renegadel (*Begins to stalk away, but turns round.*) Traitor to the cause. (*Stalks to door dramatically, but turns again, speaking now in different tone of voice.*) Look here, I believe I'm going to catch cold. (*Sneezes. Sneezes again, and somebody laughs. He glares.*) Nothing funny about it. Under any decent system of government, everybody would be inoculated against colds for nothing. Brrrrr. (*Goes out and bangs door after him.*)

SAUNDERS: Poor Comrade Staggles!

GURNEY: I'll see he's all right. It's partly my fault. (*Goes out.*)

LORD KETTLEWELL: I must have another word with Parsons—if he's still able to talk—about his Guernsey Sweep prize. Lucky devill

LADY KETTLEWELL: But, Richard, you weren't serious about letting him buy this place?

SAUNDERS: I hope he was, it is a serious subject.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Certainly I was. It'll have to go, anyhow, so why shouldn't Parsons have it. I don't think I can afford to keep it on, as well as the flat in town. I've dropped a big packet these last two days.

LADY KETTLEWELL: But it can't be as bad as all that?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): It is.

LADY KETTLEWELL: But, Richard, you've always been so clever about these things.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, and I'm still clever about them. But I can't work miracles. Unlike Parsons. I'll ring for him.

SAUNDERS: Let me ring for him. I've always wanted to ring for a rich man—it's like Aladdin. (*Pulls bell-rope.*)

PAMELA: Well, mother can help with her money. She's rich now—aren't you, mother?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Well, I have all the money I received for my business, over ten thousand pounds.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Yes, of course. Very useful. What did you do with that money, Rose?

LADY KETTLEWELL (*rather proudly*): I invested it.

LORD KETTLEWELL (*alarmed*): You invested it! What in?

LADY KETTLEWELL: Imperial Necessities Limited.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Then you'll never see your ten thousand again.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*alarmed*): Richard!

LORD KETTLEWELL: By next week, those shares will look like packing paper.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Oh—but Richard, are you sure?

LORD KETTLEWELL (*grimly*): I ought to be. I've just dropped a little fortune on them myself. (PARSONS *enters.*) So that's that. We all start all over again and start level. Except you, Parsons. You're the lucky fellow. (PARSONS, *who has had more to drink, stands there looking a picture of misery. He shakes his head, slowly and sadly.*) I say (*raising his voice*) you're the lucky fellow. (PARSONS *gives a groan.*) Oh, what's the matter? Haven't you drawn a prize after all?

PARSONS (*tragically*): Luck! Luck! I might have known. The Parsons never had any luck and never will 'ave. Crool, I call it. All a wash-out, your lordship.

SAUNDERS: What's happened?

PARSONS: It's just come over the wireless that the government won't 'ave it. They've gone and made the whole sweep illegal. Waited to hear that Joe Parsons—who's been trying his luck at one thing and another for years and years and years—had gone and drawn a horse, and then they went and washed it all out. What this country wants is—Freedom. And I'm going to tell 'em so. I'm going to tell 'em something.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Perhaps it's all a mistake.

PARSONS (*earnestly*): Your ladyship, nearly everything that happens now's a mistake. We're living in a time of gr-reat social confusion. And from now on, they'll get no help from me.

LORD KETTLEWELL: But I take it, I shall go on getting some help from you, Parsons?

PARSONS: Certainly, your lordship. Very pleased indeed to withdraw my resignation. And I've put the sandwiches and whisky in the lounge hall, your lordship, in case you should want to listen to the wireless.

LORD KETTLEWELL: All right, Parsons. (PARSONS *goes out*.) Poor old Parsons, no luck. Well, what do we now?

SAUNDERS: Let's listen in——

PAMELA: I shall go back to Russia.

SAUNDERS: But you can't. The last train to Moscow left at nine twenty-seven.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*to PAMELA*): Don't be absurd!

PAMELA: I shall go back to Russia as soon as I can.

LORD KETTLEWELL: You'll do nothing of the kind. You're joining your mother and me. Don't worry, I'll look after you all right.

PAMELA: I don't want looking after, thank you. And I'm sick of this slushy bourgeois life already.

LORD KETTLEWELL: That'll do, Pamela.

PAMELA: Why should it do? I've hardly begun to say what I want to say.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Then don't say it, my dear child. I think you're getting a little hysterical. You know, you've had a long exciting day.

PAMELA (*facing them all, vehemently*): Hysterical! That's so like you, mother, just when I'm really being reasonable. In a minute you'll want to pack me off to bed with a couple of aspirins.

LADY KETTLEWELL (*calmly*): Just what I was about to suggest, darling. I know how excited you get. And after such a day, too.

PAMELA: Yes, after such a day. That's the point. It's after such a day I want life to be cold and hard and clear——

SAUNDERS: It sounds liked iced consommé.

PAMELA: I want to be free from all this muddle and mush of sentiment. You're all of you tangled in these rotten weeds.

LORD KETTLEWELL: Bunkum!

PAMELA: That shows how hopeless you are, father. And then you expect me to change *my* life just because another silly wave of sentiment has caught you. To-day's shown me how hopeless you all are, with your

bourgeois mushiness. People who are young will have to begin all over again, as they've done in Russia. We want new conceptions of right and wrong.

SAUNDERS: Yes, and new conceptions of right and left.

PAMELA: Romantic love, marriage, family—they're all in the way, and they'll all have to go. We've got to live with our brains now. We've got to sweep away these cobwebs of sentiment and silly romantic love.

ALEC (*outside in the garden*): Cheers!

PAMELA *stops short, puts her hand up to her heart, and swings round, ALEC appears in the open window-space. The dialogue between him and PAMELA should be conducted quickly and intimately and it should be plain that for the time being the lovers are oblivious of the others. Her manner should now be in a sharp contrast to anything that has been seen in it before.*

PAMELA (*agitated*): Alec!

ALEC (*coming in*): Yes, and just in time to overhear you talking the most awful bilge.

PAMELA (*pulling herself together*): How did you get here?

ALEC: I'm staying here. I'm hoping to paint some panels for your father. Your mother recommended me to him. Good-evening, Lady Kettlewell.

LADY KETTLEWELL: Good evening.

PAMELA (*coldly*): I haven't the least desire to speak to you again.

SAUNDERS: If she hasn't the least desire to speak to him again, it will take a long time to talk it over. (*Gets*

*up and moves towards door.*) Besides, I'd like a drink and a sandwich.

*Goes out.* LORD *and* LADY KETTLEWELL *also move away.*

LORD KETTLEWELL: And some music, if we can find any.

LADY KETTLEWELL: We will leave them.

ALEC: Why didn't you reply to my telegram?

PAMELA: Don't be absurd.

ALEC: I'm not being absurd. I want to know why you didn't reply to my telegram.

PAMELA: You know very well why I didn't.

ALEC: I don't.

PAMELA: Well, for one thing, because you never sent me a telegram.

ALEC: Of course I did. And you know very well I did.

PAMELA: I know very well you didn't.

ALEC: I suppose you were too busy with your Bolshie friends to bother about it.

PAMELA: And you hadn't even the decency to write or do anything, after you went off in a huff, and now you're pretending you did.

ALEC (*heatedly*): I'm not pretending anything. I sent you a wire.

*Enter STAGGLES, in pyjamas, with mackintosh over them.*

STAGGLES: I left my book down here somewhere. Hello, what's the matter?



PAMELA (*impatiently*): Nothing's the matter. This is Comrade Staggles—Alec Grenside.

ALEC (*mumbling*): D'you do.

STAGGLES: Hello! What's on here? Are you having a row?

*The music starts softly outside.*

PAMELA (*coldly*): No.

STAGGLES: Well, you look as if you are.

ALEC: If you must know, we are. We're quarrelling about a telegram——

PAMELA: That never existed.

ALEC: That I sent to you when you were on your way back from Russia.

STAGGLES (*as if suddenly remembering*): A telegram? My God, yes! A telegram. (*He begins fumbling in the pockets of his mackintosh.*)

PAMELA: Oh, do go away, Comrade Staggles. It's nothing to do with you.

STAGGLES (*still fumbling*): I know—but. Is this it? (*Producing wire and handing it over to PAMELA.*)

ALEC (*indignantly*): Do you mean to say that's my wire and you've had it all the time?

STAGGLES: Sorry, but it came when she was busy with something and I said I'd give it to her and I must have forgotten it.

PAMELA (*looking up for a second from the telegram at which she is staring*): Idiot! (*Then she suddenly smiles at ALEC.*) Alec, it is yours.

ALEC: If I'd known you never got it. I thought you wouldn't reply and it was all over.

PAMELA (*moving towards him*): But Alec darling—I adore you. Oh—hell! I think I’m going to cry.

*The overture to the Magic Flute can be dimly heard coming through the door. STAGGLES listens. The other two walk slowly, heads very close, towards the garden.*

STAGGLES (*turns and sees others are going out*): Mozart. That’s the stuff.

*The music can be heard quite plainly now. He sits with his legs up, listening. Meanwhile the stage is dim enough for the garden outside to be seen in moonlight. The lovers are standing there embracing.*

That’s what life ought to be like—Mozart. (*He sneezes.*) Oh—damnl

*The CURTAIN falls.*

THE END





